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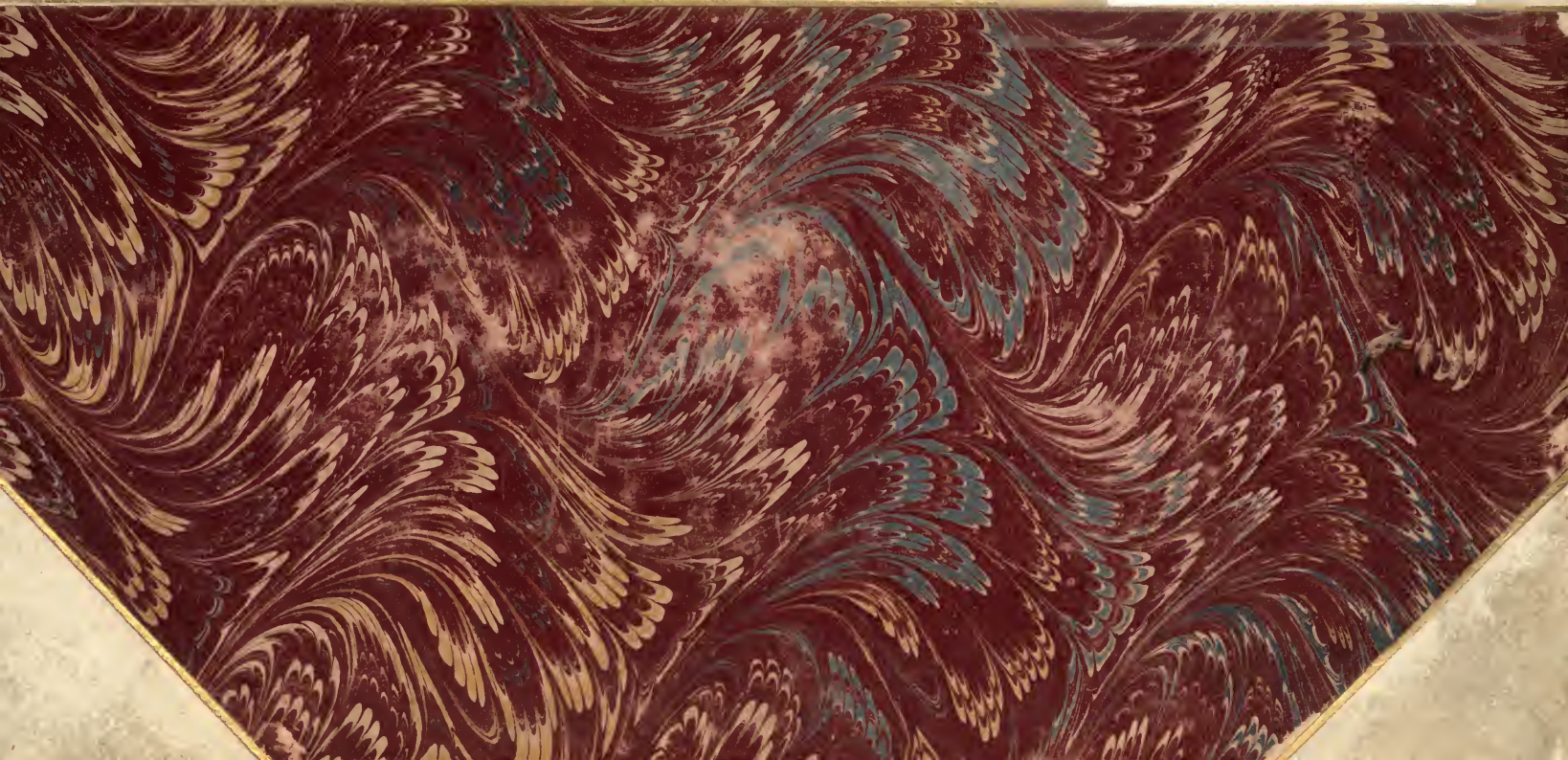

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SERMONS.

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SERMONS.

BY

HENRY EDWARD MANNING, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF CHICHESTER.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

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TO ALL

WHO, IN AN AGE OF CONTROVERSY,

ARE WALKING IN THE PATH

WHEREIN

"THE WAYFARERS, THOUGH FOOLS, SHALL NOT ERR,"

This Volume is inscribed.

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SERMON I.

CHRIST THE HEALING OF MANKIND.

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"The Word was made flesh."

Such is the Catholic Faith touching the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ—a doctrine defined by the Holy Ghost, and declared by the beloved disciple; such was the prophecy of Isaiah—"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel;"[1] such was the salutation of the angel Gabriel—"Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. . . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God:"[2] such is the witness of the apostles—"God was manifest in

[1] Isa. vii. 14.

[2] St. Luke i. 28, 35.

the flesh."[1] Again—"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."[2] So the Church confesses: "For the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world: perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting: equal to the Father as touching His Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood: who although He be God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ: one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God: one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person; for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ."

Now, in this mystery there are two cardinal points: the one, the integrity of the two natures; the other, the unity of the one person. The Word—which is the Eternal Son, begotten from everlasting, the very and Eternal God, of one substance with the Father, having in Himself all the attributes, powers, and perfections of the Divine nature—without ceasing to be God was made man, of the substance of flesh and blood,

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [2] Col. ii. 9.

and took to Himself our nature, with all its endowments and properties of soul and body; "so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man." Wherefore "God was in Christ," not as when He appeared in angelic forms to Abraham and to Israel; nor as He was in the prophets by vision and revelation; nor as He is in us by presence and fellowship: but the man Jesus Christ Himself was God. They that saw Him saw God; they that spake with Him spake with God; they whom He touched and breathed upon, felt the touch and the breath of God. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."[1]

Such is this great mystery, which we can hardly enunciate, and having enunciated can do

[1] 1 St. John i. 1-3.

little more than adore in silence. Let us, however, gather such lights as Holy Scripture gives us for the better understanding of the wisdom which is hid in it.

Gainsayers of the Catholic Faith have set themselves chiefly against this dogma, which is the corner-stone of the gospel. They have been wont to object to the mystery of the Incarnation, not only as a thing incredible in the manner of its fulfilment, but as unnecessary and circuitous—that is, inconsistent with the directness of the power and operations of God. "Why," they say, "need the Son of God be made man? What connexion has this with our salvation? Why could not man be redeemed by the simple exercise of Almighty power in forgiving, cleansing, and raising him from the dead, or in abolishing at once the power of sin and death, so that he should no longer either sin or die?"

Let us consider what answer the doctrine of Faith gives to these questions. It is this: that according to the revelation made to us of the character and kingdom of God, and of the nature and conditions of man, there appears no other way by which we could be saved but by the manifestation of God in the flesh.

1. For, first, although it is most true that God might, in His almighty power, destroy the

sinful race of mankind, and create another all holy in its stead; or separate the taint of sin and the power of death from our nature, and abolish them altogether; yet we must not forget that God is not Power alone, but Holiness, Wisdom, Justice. There are deeper necessities in the perfections of the Divine mind, and the laws of the spiritual world, which are the expressions of those perfections, than we can penetrate. Sin and death are antagonists and contradictions of the righteousness and immortality of God, which need, it may be, deeper operations of the Divine hand than a simple exercise of power. Sin and death are not realities existing in themselves, apart from beings whom God has made, but are a condition of the creatures of God, privations of holiness and life; they are negations, having no separate existence. Man is sinful, because righteousness has departed from him; and mortal, because with righteousness life also departed. The salvation of man, then, is the restoration of righteousness and immortality—the expulsion of sin and death, by the infusion of their natural and distinctive opposites of holiness and life. But as man, who has fallen under the power of sin and death, is a moral and responsible creature, and as his fall from God was through the misdirected energies of his moral powers, so the restoration of man, it

may be, can only be effected through the same means, and under the same conditions; and therefore it may be that the immutable justice of God's kingdom demands no less than the atonement of a Person. We are so greatly ignorant of the original springs of right and wrong, life and death, and of the laws which inform a mind of infinite perfection, that we cannot, without the highest presumption, doubt that there was no other way to abolish the moral causes of separation between God and man, but by One who should harmonise the laws and conditions of such a redemption in His own Person; in a word, that it needed not a bare exertion of Omnipotence, but an economy and dispensation of moral agencies in harmony with the nature of God and of man, co-ordinate with the scheme of the Divine kingdom and of human probation—that is, the intervention of a Personal Redeemer.

2. Again, sin and death had power in and over the personal nature of mankind. It was from this we had need to be redeemed. Though the laws of God's kingdom were never so fully satisfied, yet our nature would be our destruction: "to be carnally minded is death." The first sin, as it deprived Adam of the righteousness of grace, so by consequence it threw his nature into corruption; and that corruption is derived to us; and is in every

one born into the world; and infects the first motions of the will, which, as they pass through the lusts of the flesh, become biassed and distorted. Even though the kingdom of God had nothing against us, we should die, each one of us, by our own inherent mortality. No man could break the yoke of death from off his own neck; much less redeem mankind. Our very nature itself needed to be purged and restored to the conditions of immortality. There must be a work of life counteracting the work of death, and propagating life throughout the race of mankind, as death has been propagated to us from Adam. And for this cause, the Person who should undertake the salvation of mankind must assume to Himself our humanity, that is, the very nature which He was to heal and to save; and put Himself into personal relation to us. So St. Paul argues: "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same."[1] We imposed on Him that necessity. The fall of our nature was the producing cause of His incarnation: because we are men, therefore for us men, and for our salvation, He was made Man.

3. And, once more: as this burden of our humanity is too great for any of us to bear with-

[1] Heb. ii. 14.

out falling, no created and finite being, either man or angel, could so assume it as to raise it from its fall, restore its imperfections, and sustain it in strength and mastery over the powers of sin. Angels fell from their first estate, not man alone; both need either the grace of redemption or the grace of perpetual support. Even angels "that excel in strength" stand stedfast in the power of God. In Him is their life, energy, and power. Without Him they would be as we are. They can render to God nothing but what they owe. They can minister, at His bidding, to those that shall be heirs of salvation; but to save is a work too near akin to creation for any but God to accomplish. Our humanity needed to be strengthened and hallowed: of fleshly, to be again made spiritual; of mortal, to be raised above the power of death; of outcast from God, to be united to Him again. So closely, indeed, are we knit to Him, that St. Peter does not fear to say that we are made "partakers of the Divine nature."[1] Therefore He must needs "by Himself purge our sins." None but He that in the beginning said, "Let us make man in our image,"[2] could restore again to man the image of God.

So far, then, as we can reason upon things the very terms of which transcend our understanding,

[1] 2 St. Pet. i. 4. [2] Gen. i. 26.

it seems that the intrinsic necessities of God's kingdom, and of man's fallen state, require a redemption which is wrought by a Person who is able to fulfil the requirements of the Divine Law, and to perfect in Himself the redeemed nature of mankind. And what is this but the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation? which is, that the Word, the second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, took upon Him, not by way of nature, but of miracle, our manhood, "of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother, without spot of sin;" and in that nature He sanctified our humanity, fulfilled the perfect will of God, bare our sins in His own body, and by death destroyed him that had the power of death. That which as God He could not suffer, He became man that He might undergo. The impassible, eternal God was made flesh, that in the flesh He might endure all that sin had brought upon mankind. His Person was capable of the whole mystery of the fall, sin only excepted.

But here two questions have been asked. One, Why need He to have taken a body of a human mother, instead of creating one for Himself? And the other, How, if human nature be corrupt, and if the Son of God took on Him that very nature, did He escape the original sin which is in us?

To these the answer is direct and easy. It

is the very same that the Catholic Church made to the heresy of Arius, in defence of Christ's true Godhead. To the first it must be said, It was necessary that He should partake of our very nature. Had He taken a body created, as in the beginning, from the dust, it would have been a like nature, but not the *same*. It would have been a second creation of another and a new humanity; and His person would not have been partaker in the very flesh and blood derived to us from the first Adam, for the redemption of which the Word was made flesh. It was necessary that He should be united to us in our own humanity, that the grace of His Incarnation might be communicated to mankind. God, who is the Origin of all being, the Creator of all things that are, does not destroy any work He once has made, but raises it from its fall, and heals it of its wounds and diseases. Therefore He took our very nature, that He might restore it in Himself to its original purity. That very humanity in which the first Adam was created is the same in which the Second was incarnate. There was no other way, than either to create a new nature, which would not be our own, or to restore the old, in which we are fallen and dead.

And to the second question the answer is, that in taking our nature, He took it without spot of

sin; for He took it not by the way of natural descent, but by a miracle, which broke through the transmission of the original fault. Isaac and John Baptist, though born by miracle, were, nevertheless, conceived and born in sin. Eve was made from the side of Adam; Adam was made of the dust; both by miracle and without sin. The second Adam was made by the operation of the Holy Ghost, of the substance of a pure virgin. He was born in a way of which our regeneration is a shadow, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[1] And, again, from the mystery of the conception, that pure substance which He took was so united to His Divine Person that it was hallowed and sinless, in like manner as the flesh of Adam when God created him and filled him with His own Divine presence. From the moment of His birth every motion of His human soul and flesh was sinless and pure; every inclination of His will was holy. He had all the powers, affections, capacities of our nature, filled with more than original righteousness, with the holiness of God. Yet He was very man, with all our sinless infirmities, susceptible of temptation, sorrow, hunger, thirst, weariness, solitude, weeping, fear, and death. And what are all these but properties of man by creation, not

[1] St. John i. 13.

by the fall? They were in our first father before he sinned; and in them is no sin. In Christ man was exalted above the state of creation, and united to God by a bond of personal and substantial unity. The second Adam not only restored in Himself the losses of the first, but endowed the nature of man with new gifts of Divine perfection. "The first man was of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven;" "the beginning"—that is, the *originating principle* and productive life of the new "creation of God."[1]

Now, this supreme doctrine of the faith throws light upon two other doctrines closely related to it.

And, first, it shews us what is the true nature of original sin. It is "the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." This, therefore, could not reach to the manhood of our Lord, because, though born in our nature, He was not "naturally engendered," but "conceived by the Holy Ghost." Adam, by sinning, forfeited his original righteousness,—the grace of God's presence, whereby he was sanctified: through loss of this gift his nature became faulty and corrupt; and through this fault and corruption inclined to evil. We are born with this fault and corruption,

[1] Rev. iii. 14. ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ.

whereby we are by nature inclined to evil. The human will, acting under the conditions of this inclination, tends universally and by its own free choice to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and becomes itself carnal; and "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;"[1] wherefore "it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." Such is our first birth into this world: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." And in this inheritance of evil we were passive and unconscious: the fault and corruption was in us before we knew that we were in being. Such as man made himself by the fall, such are we who are born from him.

2. The other doctrine which is related to the mystery of the Incarnation is our regeneration. It is the correlative and opposite to the doctrine of original sin. So the Catholic Church has ever taught, arguing, by contraries, from the one to the other: for example, as original sin is the transmission of a quality of evil, so regeneration is the infusion of a quality of good; as original sin is inherited without the personal act of us who are born of the flesh, so regeneration is bestowed without personal merit in us who are born of the Spirit; as in the inheritance of original sin we are passive and unconscious, so in regenera-

[1] Rom. viii. 8.

tion; as original sin precedes all actings of our will, so also regeneration; as original sin is the root of all evil in us, so regeneration is the root of all good. Strange is the cycle in which errors run. Those very tokens by which the gift of regeneration is manifested to be freely given to us of God, are the very grounds of modern unbelief. Men will have it to be no more than a change of state, and not of nature; a mere outward transfer into the outward means of grace; and that, forsooth, because a passive, unconscious child is, in their eyes, incapable of the infusion of a quality of good. What is this but the Pelagianism of regeneration? How can they defend the doctrine of original sin as the transmission of evil to passive, unconscious infants, by inheritance from a man that sinned, while they deny the infusion of a quality of good by the free gift and grace of God? In truth it is much to be feared that this is simple unbelief in the great freeness of God's grace, in the presence and reality of spiritual mysteries. And it is to be feared too, that it is an unbelief which spreads further into the doctrines of faith. Can it be thought that even the doctrine of original sin is thoroughly believed? or the doctrine of the creation of Adam from the dust, and of Eve from the side of Adam? or of the mysterious Incarnation of the Word, of the substance of His

mother? or of the resurrection of the body? or of the doctrine of regeneration in any sense or shape? For, if the passiveness and unconsciousness of the subject be any objection to the regeneration of infants in baptism, it is an objection to the doctrines of creation, incarnation, resurrection, and regeneration, in any form, unless we be Pelagians and Rationalists. After all, will it not be found that the root of all this is a rationalistic unwillingness to believe any thing which does not base itself upon the active and conscious workings of the human soul?—an error fatal to faith in the Gospel of Christ; subversive of the freeness and sovereignty of God's grace, which it assumes to magnify. Let us not give up the faith of a childlike heart for petulant, half-sighted reasonings. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." "What have we that we have not received?" "By the grace of God I am what I am." All things come from Him; we are but receivers, empty vessels to be filled out of His fulness; passive and unconscious till He breathe into us the breath of life, as in our first, so in our second birth. This is the very law of our regeneration, whereby we are taken out from the first Adam, and incorporated into the second; whereby we are made "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His

bones;"[1] and are made partakers of His Incarnation, and of the virtues of healing, life, and resurrection, which go out of His flesh, which He gave "for the life of the world."

[1] Eph. v. 30.

SERMON II.

HOLINESS IN CHILDHOOD.

St. Luke ii. 40.

"And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him."

If any proof were needed of the true and proper humanity of our blessed Lord, we should have it in these words. He was subject to the laws and conditions of our nature; He was as truly a child as we have been; He grew; He waxed strong in spirit; He was endowed with gifts from His heavenly Father, being "filled with wisdom:" His understanding, reason, and conscience, were illuminated as ours; "the grace of God," the spirit of holiness, humility, love, "was upon Him." This subjection of His person to the laws of human nature is again recorded where St. Luke says, He "came to Nazareth," being about twelve years old, "and was subject unto them." "And Jesus in-

creased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." One of the earliest Fathers of the Church says, He came "not disdaining nor going in a way above human nature; nor breaking in His own person the law which He had set for mankind; but sanctifying every age by the likeness it bears to Him. For He came to save all men by Himself, —all, I mean, who are by Him born again unto God,—infants, and little ones, and children, and youths, and those of older age. Therefore He went through the several ages; for the sake of infants being made an infant, sanctifying infants; to little ones He was a little one, sanctifying those of that age, and giving them an example of godliness, righteousness, and dutiful subjection."[1]

In this passage we have many great truths recorded. One is the baptism of infants; another is the regeneration of infants baptized, in which assertion, without so much as naming it, their right to baptism is affirmed; and lastly, the parallel between the perfect holiness of our Lord in all ages from childhood, and the sanctity of those in whom the grace of regeneration has its true and perfect work.

There is evidently a correspondence, by way of analogy, between His miraculous conception and our regeneration through the Spirit. He took our na-

[1] S. Iren. lib. ii. c. 39.

ture not by natural descent, but by a miracle; we received, by supernatural operation in holy baptism, that thing which by nature we could not have.

Again: there is the same kind of analogy between the sanctity of our nature in His divine Person, and the sanctification of our person by the grace of our new birth. The sanctity of His divine nature prevented in His humanity every motion of the reason, heart, and will. The whole inward nature of His human soul, with all its faculties, powers, affections, was filled and hallowed by the Godhead of the Eternal Word.

And such, in measure and proportion, it is the design of God that our regenerate life should be. We were born again in infancy, when we were passive and unconscious, for this very end, that before we become conscious and active, the preventing grace of God might begin its work upon us. Baptismal regeneration is the very highest and most perfect form of the doctrine of God's free and sovereign grace, preventing all motions, and excluding all merit on our part. Strange that the jealousy which some profess for this great doctrine of the gospel does not make them of keener sight to discern it. If we were not passive and unconscious; if our will had begun actively and consciously to unfold itself, and follow its own inclinations, we should become at once sinners in act, and the na-

tural resistance of our hearts to the grace of God would be aggravated and confirmed. And this, in fact, we do see in unconverted heathen, and may believe of persons who have not received baptism, and of those who after baptism have sinned against the grace they have received. It is strange, I say, that they who rest all their theological system upon the sovereignty of God's grace should not perceive that its very highest and most perfect form is baptismal regeneration; and still stranger it is that, by a happy inconsistency, they act as if they had faith in that blessed truth which they profess not to believe; for we find that they universally address children with the words of divine truth, and set before them spiritual things, which can only be spiritually discerned. To do this without believing them to have received the preventing grace of God is simple Pelagianism, which such persons religiously abhor. I hardly know whether to say that they disbelieve it or no; for though they do not believe it, they so act as nothing but faith in it would make reasonable; and that is much better. Their practice is more pious than their theory. Indeed, it is seldom found, that they do not believe the regeneration of their own children, or something equivalent to it, call it by what name you will. But although they may break the full effect of an imperfect belief, yet it is not possible to be wanting

in it, or in any measure to withdraw the thankful trust of our hearts from that mystery of grace, without serious danger, great forfeitures of blessing, and sometimes lamentable evils; for without a real and active faith in the grace of regeneration, there can hardly be a true view of the nature of the regenerate life. Accordingly we find the same persons incredulous of the degree of illumination, conscientiousness, and self-government, of which children are capable. They treat them as imperfect beings, give them dangerous liberty, postpone the age of responsibility, make light of their early wildness, on the theory that it is inevitable, and may be recovered in after-years. They suffer the development of childish faults, and let their characters grow distorted, and their gait, as it were, to become artificial and faulty.

Whatever may be said of the care and wise instruction of parents and teachers who have a defective faith in holy baptism, it must be self-evident that all their guidance and watchfulness would be made indefinitely more sensitive and vigilant, if they fully believed the great grace which God had bestowed upon their children. How highly the parental office is elevated by the thought that they are made the guardians of regenerate souls! That which is by nature so sacred, by faith how much more hallowed is it! There is com-

mitted to them not the one talent which nature gave, but the ten talents of God's kingdom. They are bound by a tenfold responsibility; "for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."[1] Surely they ought to watch over the tokens of God's presence with their children, as the blessed Virgin "kept all His sayings in her heart;" not fully knowing what God has committed to them; to what stature of saintliness in God's kingdom their children may attain; what large capacities of light and sanctity may be in them, even while they are amusing them with toys, and speaking of them as if they had no ears to listen. How do they know who their children may be? Great as the parental care of the fathers and mothers of eminent saints has been, yet how little did they realise at the time what they were one day to become! How, on looking back in old age, when their sons and daughters have been edified to the perfection of a saintly life, must they have said: 'Who ever imagined what that thoughtful and docile child really was, and what lay hid in him? What a trust was ours; and with all our fancied care, how little did we realise its greatness!'

If this were indeed the temper of parents, who can say what might not be the holiness of families

[1] St. Luke xii. 48.

and homes? they would be consecrated by the vow of sanctity; ruled by a discipline of perfection. Even parents still charged with household cares, and in the midst of the world, would in some sort live the life of the retired and devout, and by their prayers, fastings, alms, charitable works, and abstinence from the world, train up their children in the simplicity and fervour of a consecrated state. If parents would only repress the vanity and self-flattery which they indulge, while they push their children forward in artificial and ostentatious habits, or correct in themselves that still more guilty indolence and neglect which makes them abdicate the personal office and duty of instructing and ruling their children, even so their households would bear more tokens of holiness. But how shall this ever be, unless the grace of regeneration be faithfully believed and cherished? If there be any one feature that distinguishes the homes of the faithful of earlier days, it is the reverence with which they looked upon their children, after they had received them back from the font, to be reared up for God. What is it but the doctrine of baptismal regeneration which has so strongly developed in the Catholic Church the paternal character of God? And in the consciousness of this heavenly Fatherhood there is contained a whole order of spiritual affections, which issue from the

grace of regeneration; such, for instance, as dutifulness, submission, docility, confidence, gladness, a holy fearlessness and filial love; and these are in a peculiar manner the basis of the saintly character. They may be called the sanctity of childhood: "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," of which children are susceptible.

Now in the history of the saints there are two things chiefly remarkable. One is, the depth of personal religion which they have displayed at an age when, in these days, we are wont to look upon children as little more than sentient and irresponsible beings. We read of charity, almsgiving, prayer, self-denial, in children of six or eight years old; and martyrdom at the age of fourteen, or even at twelve, — the age consecrated by the single mention of our Lord's early obedience, and His questioning with the doctors in the Temple.

The other remarkable feature is, their precocity of general character and powers. No doubt it is but a fallacious evidence of this to allege cases of early intellectual cultivation. We read of boys of fourteen received among the graduates of learned universities, and the like; but all this evidently depends on variable states and tests of learning, and, after all, relates only to the intellectual powers, which are sometimes raised to a very high culture, while the rest of the mind is cramped and stunted.

I speak, therefore, of the precocity of moral and spiritual life; the fulness and strength of character which youths have often shewn. They have begun to live and act as men among men, while as yet they were hardly in the dawn of manhood. They manifested a resolution and collectedness of mind which follows upon long deliberation, and is the result of a well-tried discipline. They were strong, wise, gentle, fearless, inflexible,—ruling themselves and mankind, leading armies, presiding in councils, governing churches, controlling assemblies, guiding courts and nations, at an age when, in these days, men are still in nonage and tuition. Surely some such great and visible facts were originally observed by the Church when it was prescribed that the offices of deacon and priest might be conferred on youths of twenty-three and twenty-four years of age, and even the Episcopate at thirty. And certainly, in comparing the average formation of character now with that of men who were nurtured up from holy baptism in faith of their regeneration, and in religious homes or devout schools of discipline, it must be confessed that in the science of the saints, and in the practice of life, we are backward and unripe. If we were asked to find a reason for it, I believe the truth would be best expressed by saying that these later ages have lost faith in the miraculous concep-

tion and holy childhood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the type and pledge of our regeneration in holy baptism, and of the development of our regenerate life; and not only so, but that a false and shallow system of theology has grown up, and thrust down this high doctrine from its place. A prevalent notion in these later times is, that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is superstitious and delusive; that it tends to deadness, worldliness, unspirituality; that the Christian life of those who have been religious from childhood is generally tame, cold, and formal; that true Christian perfection is to be found in penitents and those who are converted late in life; that experience of sin and guilt is the stimulus of personal responsibility, and the very life of the conscience; and that the fervour, zeal, and activity of the converted sinner is the true perfection of the Christian character.

Now the analogy we have been considering, between the sanctification of our nature in the Person of our Lord, and the sanctification of our persons through the gift of regeneration, will suggest to us some very important truths, which have the force and extent of first principles in the theory and practice of a holy life. And these we will now shortly consider.

1. In the first place, then, we may learn what is the effect of sin after baptism upon the regene-

rate nature. As in all other truths, so in this, men have gone into both extremes, some making post-baptismal sin all but unpardonable, and others, hardly needing to be forgiven; some making its soils indelible, some treating it as if it left in the soul no soil at all. Now is there not some evident confusion in all this? And does not the confusion begin in our not clearly distinguishing between the effect of sin upon the relation in which the regenerate man stands to God, and its effect upon the inward and regenerate nature?

Again: when we speak of sin after baptism, surely another and a primary distinction is required; for all baptized men have sinned, therefore they have all sinned after baptism. To solve this difficulty, the distinction of sins into venial and mortal has been laid down. But in one sense, and that a most true sense, all sins are mortal. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"—"The wages of sin is death." The conceiving of a sinful thought is a direct sin against the Spirit of holiness. Moreover, the privation of original righteousness is a state of sin: "We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Not to be holy is to be sinful; there is no third estate. Therefore all baptized men have sinned, in one sense mortally, and that after baptism.

But the distinction, as it is recognized in the

Litany, is plainly this :—There is one class of sins partly of omission, partly of commission, arising from our original corruption and infirmity of nature, and from the subtilty and strength of temptation ; they seem to cling to our fallen nature even after regeneration, almost like mortality itself. And these are sins which neither rescind the remission of sins freely given in baptism, nor hinder the advance of our sanctification ; such, for instance, are evil thoughts and motions of our humanity, flashes and transitions of temper, rash words, wanderings of the heart in prayer, and the like, which are both striven against and followed by compunction and confession. There is another class of sins which both cancels the relation of present forgiveness with God and hinders the growth of sanctification in the soul : such as sins of the flesh, evil imaginations, and temper if indulged, habitual pride, uncharitableness, and the like. Now, between these two classes there can be no third. Sins must either cancel or not cancel our forgiveness ; hinder or not hinder our advance in sanctification ; and they will accordingly be mortal or venial.

It is plain, then, that when we speak of sin after baptism, we do not mean those venial sins which the holiest of regenerate men have committed. Such sins are, in fact, little more than the remainder of that nature which needed regenera-

tion; and their continued presence in the soul arises from the fact, that God has ordained our restoration to holiness to be wrought not by a single act of His will, but by a progressive probation of our own. We may, therefore, dismiss this class.

Of the other,—that is to say, of those sins which cancel our relation of present forgiveness, and hinder the sanctification of our souls,—this is to be said. There is a distinction to be drawn between the effect of such sins on our relation towards God, and the effect of them on our inward and regenerate nature; or in common words, between the guilt and the defilement of them.

As to the guilt, this we know, that upon a true repentance it shall be absolutely forgiven.

But our present subject is the parallel between the sanctity of our Lord, and the holiness of the regenerate. It is, therefore, the effect of sin upon the inward and regenerate nature that we are now considering; and of this it has been already said, that its effect is, to hinder the advance of our sanctification; and if so, it is no less than a direct antagonist of the grace of our regeneration, and a defeat of the purpose of God in our new birth of the Spirit: it is a resistance to the preventing grace of God, a refusal to be led by Him, and to follow His guidance and illumination. The work

of the new creation is brought to a stand; the capacities and powers of the new nature are baffled and thwarted; and, further, the mind of the flesh is thereby released from the power which held it in check. From our first childhood sin unfolds itself by its own energy, and by the deliberate motions of the will, and thereby gains to itself a new condition. From its potential it passes into an actual reality; and by act and reality it directly strengthens its own energies, and confirms itself in its own particular forms, such as lust, anger, pride, falsehood, sloth; and having become formal, becomes also habitual; and that raises a twofold opposition to the Spirit of holiness. The passive and unconscious state of the fallen being passes into active and conscious sin. What was at first a passive inability becomes an energetic resistance, an excited enmity, and a conscious warfare of the will. By this means the soul becomes inflamed, darkened, and defiled. The continual actings of the desires, lusts, imaginations, leave soils and stains, and, as it were, deposit a crust of evil upon the whole spiritual nature. It multiplies its own plague-spots in darkness. And the spiritual being inclines to the state and fellowship of fallen angels, to which the regenerate sinner is akin both in nature and in apostacy. How little parents seem to know what they are doing when they make light

of their children's early sins! They are doing nothing less than their best to undo God's grace in the regeneration of their children, to make their salvation doubtful, and their future sorrows and losses many and inevitable.

2. And this brings us to a second inference. We may hence learn the true relation of repentance to regeneration. Those who have no faith in holy baptism look upon repentance or conversion as the perfect aim or design of the dispensation of grace. They consider it as the accomplishment of the mind of the Spirit towards us, and place it on the highest step of our ascent to God. And how can they help doing so, while they believe nothing of the true sanctity of the regenerate? How can they understand that what they put forward as the highest state is but the lower; that which they regard as the perfect work is only the remedy,—blessed indeed, but, at best, no more than the remedy,—after the grace of regeneration has failed to work its perfect work in us? In one sense, indeed, all saints need repentance; the holiest, who from childhood grow in light and sanctity, grow also in compunction, tears, and humiliation: but this is not what we commonly call repentance. We mean the conviction, sorrow, remorse, and turning of the adult, after falls, from sin to God; that is conversion. Now if there be any truth in what has been

said, it is clear that the necessity of this kind of conversion or repentance arises out of the disobedience of the regenerate, and from the falls of those that sin grievously after baptism. That which is put forward as the perfection of the saints is the recovery of fallen Christians. And the reason why this theory maintains itself so strongly and is so popular is, because it is the interest of the majority to hold it. The great multitude of Christians are in that state. "Many are called, and few are chosen." All are regenerate, but saints are few. The multitude are at best to be numbered among penitents; and their own case fixes their theology, and sets bounds to their belief. What is true of themselves, they think is true of all, and true alone; partly, I say, from being bribed, as it were, to hold a theory that will make the best of their own case; and partly because the very nature of their case must make them unconscious of the realities which others know who have never fallen as they have. Besides, the tokens and evidences of repentance are just those that are most perceptible to the world. They appeal to the ear and to the eye, and force themselves upon the notice of men. The zeal, fervour, activity, which converted or converting men exhibit are so nearly akin to the same qualities in the mind and character of worldly people, that they are more

easily understood and appreciated. The character of true saintliness, as it is most remote from the world, and even opposed to it, is least understood and valued by the world. It is either simply not perceived to exist, or it is thought eccentric, weak, and unprofitable. This will explain why the popular religion will always incline to exalt repentance to the position of the leading idea and design of the gospel. But when we pass from the judgment of sight to the discernment of faith, we shall see that it is but remedial and secondary; that it is a painful and laborious undoing of the tangled and stubborn perversity of the disobedient will; that it is, as it was called of old, a kind of regeneration, implying thereby the freeness of God's mercy, the greatness of the necessity, the dangerous state of the lapsed Christian, the depth of the injury done to the spiritual nature; so that it can be likened only to the original state of sin and death, and healed by a work second only in greatness to the original operation of preventing grace upon the soul. All this shews us that the repentance of baptized men is as the difficult and precarious recovery of those who, after the partial cure of a death-sickness, fall into relapse. The powers of nature are wasted, the virtues of medicine baffled, and the disease grows doubly strong. A sad exchange for those who once walked in white

raiment, and were numbered among the children of God.

3. Lastly, we see in what it is that they who have been kept and sanctified from their regeneration exceed the blessedness of penitents. They have never fallen away from their first estate. The grace of their election, though it has been resisted and grieved, has never been baffled and reduced to inaction. Not to have fallen into the pollution of the world, the flesh, and the devil, how high a grace! How unspeakably great is the loving-kindness of Him who has thus kept them! From what has the grace of regeneration protected them;—from what dangerous familiarity with evil—from what excitements of the carnal mind—from what defilement of the imagination—from what obliquity of the will—from what unfeelingness of heart! To be free from all this, how blessed! To be ignorant of that which must be unlearnt with pain and sorrow by all who will enter God's kingdom! From what hours of bitter remorse—from what years of toil, weakness, and infirmity, are they preserved! And what a delusion is it to believe that the visible fervour and zeal of penitents is evidence of a higher state of grace! What can their zeal or fervour do in comparison with the unconscious strength and stedfast principle of those that have ever walked with God? It is not, indeed, to be denied that we

do sometimes see in "righteous persons who need no repentance" a torpor and sluggishness of spirit; but still oftener the world so judges of them because it cannot read the tokens of their state aright. The depth and inward force of true holiness are beyond the world's ken; the calm and unmoved collectedness with which they set themselves to the greatest tasks, worldly eyes cannot discern from torpor and tameness. Why should they exhibit the noise and excitement of effort, whose very nature is moulded into unconscious obedience? They do great things in silence; and the world thinks that because they say little, they do nothing. The haste and exertion which penitents must needs use to make up their lost time and ground, has in them long since passed into the stedfast and quiet consistency of a mature piety. Why should they "strive or cry?" Why should their voice be heard in the streets, whose life has been sheltered under the shadow of the Most High, and nurtured into the peace and strength of habitual faith? There is in the deep, burning zeal of a saintly mind an intensity which the excitement of converts can never approach. Even in those peculiar graces which are thought to be the all-but exclusive property of penitents, the fervour, self-chastisement, resolution, entire devotion of their whole being to God, what is there to compare with the glowing charity, the

vivid compunction, the perfect mortification, and absolute self-oblation of those that are early sanctified? Great and blessed as are the graces and acts of penitents, they are but approximations to the sanctity which they might themselves have attained, had they preserved their baptismal life from soils and lapses. The very visibleness and loudness, I may say, of their religion betrays difficulty and effort. The movements of nature are easy and spontaneous, and though done without reflection, are more truly the acts of the whole being than those things which we do by rule, and thought, and with conscious preparation. In the one case it has become our own, in the other it is a borrowed nature. This is the ripe fruit of holy childhood; and to this every one that is born again may, in his measure, attain. The holiness of children is the very type of saintliness; and the most perfect conversion is but a hard and distant return to the holiness of a child. Let us, then, lay to heart the great gift which has been bestowed upon us. Our baptism was a change greater than any which can come on the sons of Adam, except death and the resurrection. Let us humble ourselves with plaints which cannot be uttered, for the sins, by deed and thought, which in childhood, boyhood, and youth, we have committed against the grace of our regeneration. And though perhaps it may be now too late

for us—though we cannot make what is done to be undone—though we cannot hope to be numbered among those who have never fallen from the favour of our heavenly Father, yet we may hope to have our lot in the regeneration among the order of penitents. For us, alas, the unconscious purity, the ripe wisdom, clear illumination, piercing insight, calm strength, meek inflexibility, the patience, the charity, the full, consistent, changeless perfection of the saints, is perhaps impossible. But let us, by prayers and labours, by word and by example, strive to rear up the elect of God, from their childhood, in the sanctity of Jesus Christ. Strive to make your homes to be holy, and your families to be households of saints. There is one great school of the regenerate, which is the Church, and one Master, the "Holy Child Jesus." Under and through Him let us foster the children of His kingdom. And then who can say how broad and resplendent the note of sanctity may once more shine forth upon our tossed and distracted Church? what virtues of grace and truth may go forth from our spiritual sons to heal the springs of life throughout this fallen world?

SERMON III.

HOLY OBEDIENCE.

St. Matt. iii. 13-15.

> Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him."

Of all the acts of our blessed Lord, there is hardly any which at first sight seems more difficult to explain than His submitting to be baptized. It was not like His circumcision, which was received in infancy by the care of His holy mother, and in accordance with the existing law of the Church; nor like His prayers and fastings, which are perpetual examples to us; because the baptism of John was but for a time, and is now passed away. We shall nevertheless find that hardly any one of

His acts contains deeper and more direct precepts for our imitation.

It was certainly a strange and incomprehensible sight when He who was called the Son of God, who was born by the power of the Holy Ghost, drew nigh to receive from the hands of a man like ourselves the baptism of repentance. Well might St. John Baptist forbid Him, and say, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" What could that baptism confer upon Him? or what part could He have in that baptism who could have no part in repentance? Was it not an act of presumption in a man, albeit "more than a prophet," to administer the sacrament of penitence and cleansing to One that was without sin? No doubt St. John shrank back with awe and fear, as well as humility and self-abasement. And Jesus said, "'Suffer it to be so now.' It is all well and in season, as hereafter it shall be seen: 'for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.'" There was some law of His Father's kingdom to which therein he rendered His obedience, some deeper reason than appeared; for St. John then gave way: "then he suffered Him."

Now, in the first place, the baptism of our Lord was an act of obedience to the appointment of His Father. He was born under the law, and

by circumcision He was brought into the elder covenant. He honoured that law by a perfect submission to it throughout His whole life. Though greater than the law, and Lord of that very law, He obeyed it by observing all things which it enjoined on the obedience of others; as, for instance, the observance of the feasts and worship of the Temple, and the offerings which Moses commanded. When John was sent to baptize, a new appointment of God appeared. In that baptism, as before in the command of circumcision, the will of His Father was revealed. In receiving it He obeyed a divine precept. It was a part of holy obedience, which is most living and expressive when it is rendered to appointments in which the will of God alone is the reason of obeying. To the Holy One of God baptism was as needless as circumcision; but in both the will of God was revealed from heaven, and in both the grace of holy obedience "fulfilled all righteousness."

Moreover it was not an act of obedience and submission alone, but also of humiliation. The baptism of John was emphatically the baptism of sinners. It was a baptism of cleansing unto repentance, that is, given to penitents as a means of perfecting their repentance. The Baptist stood by the river, surrounded by a multitude of sinners, publicans and harlots, "confessing their sins."

Men and women of all characters, the most notorious and outcast, the reckless and unclean, pressed to him with "violence," to be washed of their impurities. The whole land seemed moved to give up its sinners to the discipline of repentance; the whole city poured out its evil-livers to this new and austere guide of penitents. "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."[1] It was an act of public humiliation to join Himself and to mingle in such a crowd; to partake their shame; to seek the same cleansing, with all the circumstantials of repentance. And at that time He was known only as "the carpenter," "the son of Joseph." He had wrought no miracles, exhibited no tokens of His Divine nature and mission. He was but as any other Israelite, and as one of a thousand sinners He came and received a sinner's baptism. This was a part of His humiliation.

And we may further observe, that the time of His baptism had been appointed as the time of His open manifestation as the Son of God. St. John was commissioned not only to prepare His way in the souls of men, but also to proclaim Him to be the Lamb of God. He says, "I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to

[1] St. Matt. iii. 5, 6.

Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."[1] So manifold are the works of God. John came to make ready a people by repentance for the kingdom of God, and in so doing he became also the public herald and witness of the Messiah. The public proclamation of the Son of God sprang suddenly and unlooked for out of the ministry of repentance. Our Lord's act of public humiliation served also to declare Him as the Son of God. This public declaration was, it would seem, a necessary condition to the undertaking of His public ministry as the Messiah. Until then He had lived a life of privacy; henceforward He was consecrated to the work of the Redeemer of the world.

There is still another mark of deep wisdom in this same mystery. At His baptism the Holy Ghost descended, and lighted upon Him; and in that inscrutable unction He was set apart to the

[1] St. John i. 31-34.

work of the Messiah. The words of the prophet, to which He appealed at Nazareth as His commission, were then fulfilled: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor."[1]

Such, then, appears to be the true intention and effect of His baptism in the river. It was an act of obedience and of humiliation; it was the public proclaiming of His divine Sonship, and the solemn anointing by which He was invested with the office of the Messiah.

1. The first inference to be drawn from this part of our Lord's example is, that submission to every even the least ordinance of Divine authority is a plain, self-evident duty. What the baptism of John was to our Lord, the Church is to us. And this cuts off at once all pleas and excuses by which men endeavour to extenuate the guilt of disobeying the rule of the Church. On the one side we here see John the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, a mere man, a preacher of repentance, baptizing with water; and on the other, Jesus the son of Mary by the operation of the Holy Ghost, the Son of God by eternal generation, the sinless One, the Sanctifier of the elect. What claim or hold had that doctrine and that rite over Him? If ever any might have held himself exempt from

[1] St. Luke iv. 19.

submission, it was He. Therefore we see that no plea of intellectual or spiritual superiority, no reasonings about forms and externals and empty rites and the like, can exempt any man born again through Christ from the duty of submitting to the rule of His Church. Now no one openly denies that the Church has some authority, and that from God; because to deny this would be to deny the existence of the Church itself, and nobody is so far beside himself as to venture on this extravagance. The only question is about the limit of that authority; and it is in fixing this boundary that men of a certain cast of mind do, by consequence and in fact, deny the power of the Church altogether. I have said that we are bound to submit to every ordinance of Divine authority, and that for this reason: because the whole system of the Church being divided into ordinances which are of immediate Divine obligation, and ordinances which mediately—that is, through an authority ordained of God—become binding on us; or, in other words, some being appointed by God Himself, and some by men having Divine authority: the same obligation runs through all, and in them we obey God. For instance, the apostolical ministry, the Holy Sacraments, and the Holy Scriptures, were appointments and ordinances of Christ Himself. The authority of the apostolical ministry,

and of the Church to which that power, with the Scriptures and Sacraments, was committed, is therefore divine, as derived from Him: and all those details of practice, discipline, and order, which the changes of the world and the succession of time have required, being made and ordained by the same authority, and in accordance with the mind of the Holy Spirit as revealed in Scripture, are enjoined upon the consciences of the members of Christ by the original authority derived from Him to His Church. And that is the meaning of His own words: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." And St. Paul's words: "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God." The whole, therefore, of the order of the Church — its ritual, discipline, and practice, its commandments and precepts, — all, that is, which meets us at this day in the system which it has laid down for the guidance of its people — lays us under the obligation of holy obedience, for the sake of the Divine authority which is contained in the least things as truly as in the greatest. It matters not who or what we are, whether pastors or people, nor how learned, or illuminated, or sanctified we may be, nor how small, external, and, as we say, trifling, the appointment may seem; there is the same great law of the Divine authority on the one hand, and

of holy obedience on the other. As our obedience passes on from the Church to its Head; so our disobedience is a rejection of His authority in His own kingdom.

2. Now we may remark further, that little things are great tests of the temper and character of men. The least things are often the most pregnant with moral probation; the less the particular precept is, the more the principle is exhibited: for instance, things simply commanded or forbidden without any assigned or perceptible reason, or those which in themselves have no particular attractions or inducements: such, for example, as the original probation of Adam by the forbidding of a single tree in the garden. This is what we are wont to call gratuitous or wanton disobedience; the temptation being weak, and the circumstances unlikely to promote the temptation. So, on the other hand, in the obedience of the Second Adam. It consisted not only in the universal obedience of His spotless holiness to the great laws of His Father's will; but to the very least, in the "fulfilling of all righteousness," even to the baptism in Jordan. In this what humility, submission, self-abasement, what pure and perfect obedience of soul to the mind of the Father! So it is in the laws and precepts by which our probation in the Church is controlled. What a test of the heart and temper is contained in the

precept of unity! How directly it elicits any insubordination and irregularity of the individual will! With how wonderful a wisdom is the unity of the Church constructed, so as to hold together the obedient, and to yield before the rebellious! It is as the net let down into the sea, firm yet frail; close enough to bring those that abide in it safe to shore, but giving way for the escape of those that resist. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."[1]

To some minds, perhaps, the deep spiritual reasons which make united worship a high duty and direct means of sanctification, and divided or schismatical worship as high a sin, and as direct a stimulant of those tempers which grieve the Spirit of holiness, are not so much as conceivable; and yet, with their imperfect knowledge of the matter of their obligation, they do not scruple at the slightest offence, or the most trivial annoyance; or because every thing is not ruled and ordered, done and left undone, according to their liking, to withdraw themselves from the unity of a parochial altar, or even from the Church itself, and to join with those who are in open and hostile opposition to the Church

[1] 1 St. John ii. 19.

in which till then they professed to find salvation. Now, what is the secret of all this? It is nothing more than the detection of the spirit of disobedience, which always dwelt in them, but till then had not betrayed itself. The whole character is told in a single act; and the less important the matter, the more mature and deliberate is the disobedience. The insubordination of a man who sets himself against a rite or a vesture, is very much greater than that of one who gainsays a point of doctrine; for the latter chooses his field in matters which, if any thing can justify refusal of submission, may go farther to do it, than the paltry, trifling, pitiful excuses with which many try to mask their disobedience under a plea of conscience. The less the occasion, the greater the insubordination. The lighter the alleged provocation, the heavier the offence. On the one side is the authority derived from our Lord to His Church, enjoining some commonplace and indifferent point of order; on the other, men professing the matter to be unimportant, and yet resisting the injunction. What is this but the most direct and naked struggle between authority and disobedience? If the pretext were greater, it would disguise the truth. As a test of the man, the less the better, because the probation is more visible, barefaced, and instructive. It is like the

rage of Naaman when he was disappointed of being bidden to "do some *great* thing," and was commanded to wash in Jordan. The probation of faith, submission, docility, and also of self-will, impatience, pride, is complete. It is a remarkable fact, that an insubordinate temper in trifling and external matters seems to have been always the peculiar characteristic of those who have little faith in the holy Sacraments. The sacramentarian error appeared to prepare the way for contests about vestments and postures. And how should it be otherwise? for what can be more unmeaning, wearisome, and irritating, than a careful obedience to small precepts and appointments which are destitute of spiritual grace, empty, carnal, dead, legal, and the like? The smaller they are, to such minds the more provoking. But the fact of the provocation reveals the fact of the unbelief. It is the index of a scheme of doctrine, and of a theological school. The command to wash in Jordan detected the unbelief of Naaman. Though he had come all the way out of Syria, with much profession and circumstance, to the prophet in Israel, it is plain that he had little faith after all. The prophet proved him, as the Head of the Church through the visible order of it proves us now.

3. Another obvious remark is, how great are the consequences which flow from these little things.

At the baptism of our Lord He was proclaimed to be the Christ, by the word of the Baptist, by the voice of the Father, by the descent of the Holy Ghost. He at that time received without measure the anointing of the Eternal Spirit. Surely this is a type of the graces which descend on holy obedience. It is a silent pledge to us that the lowly, patient, submissive, docile heart shall be greatly sanctified. And so, indeed, we find it. Whatsoever may be said in praise of the earnestness, zeal, activity, and laboriousness, of those who resist the authority of the Church, there is a perceptible difference of spirit and character distinguishing them from those who live in submission to its rule. Whatever may be said of the active side of their character, it is certain that we look almost in vain for the gentleness, patience, softness, meekness, self-control, self-chastisement, the largeness and elevation of mind, the passive charity, which belong to the obedient. The whole theory of life and devotion is lower. I am speaking of good and sincere people, not of the turbulent and self-conceited; but of those who unhappily have been drawn into the same general school, and though they keenly see its faults, cannot bring themselves to forsake it. Good as they are, their standard is personal and earthly, drawn from their own inward views and feelings, or from the example or opinions

of individuals of the same school. This is strikingly true of those who have been brought up in sects; and also of all such schools within the communion of the Church, as have, by following particular minds, lost the tone and habit of the catholic spirit. It is not necessary to say more than that the very temper of devotion, self-renunciation, reverence, submission, which is the peculiar grace of the obedient, is by them looked upon and even denounced as superstition, weakness, bondage, and slavishness. Their own estimate of the saintly character as unfolded in the Church is the best test and portrait of their own. We can do them no wrong in believing that what they censure they do not imitate. There can be no doubt that the principle of submission is peculiarly trying to some minds; and that the very habit which makes it unpalatable is that which seriously obstructs the improvement of the whole character. It is rarely seen that people grow to ripeness of faith, and to that undefinable mellowness and gentleness of spirit which is the very character of our Lord, without learning the great lesson of obedience and submission, even in little things, to the will and authority of others; that is, without obeying God in His Church. This temper is either the cause or the consequence of their growth in grace. Either way it seems inseparable from it; and to lack this, much

more to be consciously opposed to it, is a bar, no one can say how great, to our advance in learning the humility and the mind of Christ.

I have hitherto spoken only of the direct moral effects in the way of self-discipline ; but there is a higher condition of our sanctification which may be seriously affected by a captious, impatient, insubordinate temper—I mean, the direct gifts of grace which fall upon the lowly and submissive heart. Like water-springs, the Spirit leaves the lofty hills, and gathers in low places. The Spirit of the Dove does not descend and abide on the unruly, headstrong, self-willed. We know not what they forfeit. Yet so it has been from the beginning. The outward and visible Church, since the world entered into it, has always been turbulent and disordered : its rule disputed, its discipline infringed, its doctrine gainsayed. Men of unsubdued tempers and headstrong wills have at all times troubled the outer courts of the Church ; but there is a sanctuary of holy obedience into which they cannot enter. There is around every altar a fellowship of the contrite, humble, and submissive ; who see Christ in His Church, and in it both minister to Him and obey Him. And they have a peace which is from the God of peace. The Spirit of peace, in gentleness, quietness, meekness, dwells in them, and shelters them even in this rough world

from the strife of tongues. They look out upon the angry buffeting face of the visible Church with calmness and a stedfast heart; knowing that all these things must be for the trial and manifestation of the sons of God. They know that at the best the Church in this world is no more than an imperfect realisation of its perfect idea; an approximation to a type which is in heaven alone. All the struggle, and strife, and lofty looks, and swelling words, and rebellious deeds, of the disobedient and lawless are no more than must be while the kingdom of the new creation is spreading its dominion over the corruption of the old.

Let us, then, never be out of heart, though the face of the Church be ever so much marred and smitten by the spirit of misrule, and by the sway of disobedience. Let its effect on us be to make us cling closer to the guide which God has given us. Let us render a submissive, uniform, glad obedience to the Church; to its doctrine, discipline, ritual; to its precepts of fasting and humiliation; to its lightest counsel; to the least intimation of its mind and will. Let us watch not only against openly rebellious motions of our hearts, but against vanity, affectation, love of singularity, peculiar ways, habits, and choices, by which men are tempted to bend and tamper with, or, as they would say, to adapt and accommodate the system

of the Church to their times and to themselves. Some men cannot even say the prayers of the Church without needless and fanciful changes. This is nothing less than simple exaltation of self above the Church; and making themselves a rule for its orders and doctrines, instead of simply obeying it. Let us mortify self in all its forms; not in the grosser alone, but in those refined shapes in which it keeps its hold upon so many. How few men can endure to be put out of sight and forgotten. All that they say and do has about it something subtil and subdued, hardly perceptible, yet never unperceived, by which self again comes into view. Even in the most sacred things, and in the holiest actions, and with the precepts of self-renouncement in their mouths, there is a something, not so much as a word, but a tone, a look, an air, which expresses in full the presence and consciousness of a will not dead to its own choice. Let us seek with our whole heart the gift of holy obedience, that in all things we may submit to Christ ruling in His Church, as He submitted to St. John baptizing by the commandment of His Father. Let us, by prayer and self-chastisement, so cross and keep under our likings, preferences, views, opinions, judgments in all things, when the will of the Church is made known, that we may in all things obey "as unto the Lord, and not unto

men;" with him who said: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

SERMON IV.

FASTING A MEANS TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

St. Matthew iv. 2.

"When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered."

The fasting of our Lord is one of those mysteries by which the Church in her solemn Litany pleads to be delivered from the power of sin. "By Thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation, good Lord, deliver us." Like the mystery of His holy Incarnation, of which it is a consequence, it must be far beyond our understanding. It seems strange that the Holy One should fast; that He who was without sin should use a sinner's discipline. We feel hardly to know what we may say of it. Thus much is certain, as the Church teaches us to say, that His forty days' fast was "for our sakes." It was for us sinners that He was incarnate and born; that He submitted to the conditions of hu-

manity; that He took natural sleep and food; and so likewise that He watched and fasted.

Again: it was as a part of His humiliation for us. As He took our nature, so He put Himself in our stead. He took the condition of a sinner; He "was made under the law," as one condemned by it; was circumcised, as one that needed mortification of the flesh; was baptized with the baptism of repentance, as one that needed forgiveness; even so He fasted, as one that needed the self-chastisement of a penitent. It was the humiliation of the Holy One to undergo all that is the due reward of sinners.

And again: He fasted for our imitation; not, indeed, in the length and intensity of His miraculous abstinence, but according to the measures of our nature. His example has all the force of a command. Though there were no precept of fasting in the New Testament, yet this prominent act of our Great Master, the true pattern of a devout and holy life, would be enough. In this, likewise, it is most true that "the disciple is not above his Master, neither the servant above his Lord." We may be sure that there are virtues and an efficacy in the discipline of fasting known only to Him who "knew what is in man." It is related, in some deeper way than we understand, to the realities of our spiritual warfare, to the act-

ings of our spiritual life, and to the substance of our natural being. Whether we can see all the reasons of it or no, we may rest assured that by His own example He has, in the most emphatic way, prescribed fasting to us; that no one who desires to advance in a devout life will venture to disregard the practice; and that none but they who dare to slight the example of our blessed Lord will venture to speak lightly of the duty.

I say this, because worldly, self-confident, and light-minded people, not knowing of what they speak, are wont to justify their own shallow and self-sparing religion by sinful levities on this most sacred duty. Let them beware of what they are saying. Either our Lord's life is our example, or it is not. Let them choose which they will, and abide by the consequences. To those for whom His life is no example, His death is no atonement; to those to whom His example is a law, the practice of fasting is a duty.

Fasting is the act of abstaining either wholly or in part from natural food, and that for a longer or for a shorter time, either at the precept of the Church, or by our own voluntary self-discipline. The principle on which it is founded may be stated thus: that as there is a religious use of food, so there is a religious abstinence from it. To this it is commonly objected, that it is a matter wholly

indifferent, external, inefficacious; that it savours of formality, false confidence, and dark views of our justification; and that it is all but expressly condemned in holy Scripture. It is asked, Who fasted more than the Pharisees, and what were they? What can be plainer than St. Paul's words: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."[1] "Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse."[2]

Now, rather than answer these objections in detail, it will be better to establish one or two plain truths, on the proof of which these objections must fall to the ground. And in so doing, it may be well not to quote the examples of saints, as Moses, David, Daniel, Anna, St. Peter, St. Paul, and of the early Church; though this, it might be thought, would be enough for any faithful or reverent mind; nor to bring direct texts, such as "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites;"[3] or, "Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? . . . The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days:"[4] because such modes of proof (suf-

[1] Rom. xiv. 17.
[2] 1 Cor. viii. 8.
[3] St. Matt. vi. 18.
[4] St. Mark ii. 19, 20.

ficient as they are) generally end in a question how far examples are binding, or precepts still in force, and the like.

It will be better simply to take the objector on his own ground, and to shew, first, that fasting without a pure, or at least a penitent, heart, is useless, or even worse; next, that fasting is a means to attain both penitence and purity; and, lastly, that without fasting there is seldom to be found any high measure of either.

1. And first let it be said: That fasting without a pure, or at least a penitent, heart, is simply useless, and may be even worse.

This, I suppose, it is hardly necessary to prove. The objector cannot overstate it. There are no words of energy and denunciation which are not used in holy Scripture to condemn the hypocrisy of such abominable fasts. The prophets are full of them. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as

a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor, that are cast out, to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"[1] Again: "Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry."[2] And again: "Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"[3] "When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."[4] "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."[5] "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth

[1] Is. lviii. 3-7. [2] Jer. xiv. 11, 12. [3] Zech. vii. 5, 6.
[4] St. Matt. vi. 16. [5] St. Matt. xxiii. 26.

a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. . . . For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man."[1]

There were Pharisees then in the Church of God, and there are Pharisees now; men of an ascetic outside, full of darkness and impurity within. A rigid system of formal religion often covers a thoroughly licentious state of heart. Moreover, they that fast with scrupulous rigour are sometimes proud, uncharitable, self-complacent, or indevout, irreverent, and secular. All this is most true and fearful; but I suppose that no one ever thought that acts of fasting could cancel a habit of mental sin. Nay, they become both sins and dangers in themselves. Therefore let the very worst be said of fastings without repentance, mortification, and charity. They are mere unsanctified hunger and thirst, with self-deception. Outward humiliation without a corresponding inward humility, external severities without internal abstinence from sins of the world and of the flesh, are simple hypocrisy. They are not only useless, but fearful provocations of God. On this let so much suffice.

2. And further: what is fasting but one of the means of attaining to penitence and purity?

[1] St. Matt. xv. 11, 19, 20.

It is not an end. In itself it is nothing. There is no fasting in heaven, no abstinence among the spirits of the just. It is only we, fallen and sullied, that need this discipline of humiliation. Fasting is a part of repentance. It not only expresses indignation at ourselves, as unworthy of God's pure creatures, but it helps to perfect our abasement. It is a part of our humiliation: a means of realising our own weakness, and of mortifying the strength and lusts of the flesh. Now all this will be plain, if we consider what holy Scripture tells us of the flesh in which we are born, and of its power against and over the spirit which dwells in us.

Throughout holy Scripture we are taught that the flesh which we bear is the occasion of disobedience. I say the occasion, because it was not originally the source. The temptations of sin passed through the flesh as their avenue of approach; and sin, when committed, deposited its evil in our mortal body. Therefore the flesh in holy Scripture is spoken of as the principle of disobedience and the source of temptation. St. Paul says, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against

God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."[1] Again: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."[2] Again: "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."[3] "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh."[4] "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. . . . The works of the flesh are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."[5] "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."[6] St. Paul speaks of "purifying of the flesh;" St. Peter, of "putting away the filth of the flesh;" of alluring "through the lusts of the flesh;" St. John, of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." St. Jude, of "the garment spotted by the flesh."[7] From

[1] Rom. viii. 5-8. [2] Ibid. 13. [3] Rom. xiii. 14.
[4] Gal. v. 13. [5] Ibid. 16, 17, 19-21. [6] Gal. vi. 8.
[7] Heb. ix. 13; 1 St. Peter iii. 21; 2 St. Peter ii. 18; 1 St. John ii. 16; Jude 23.

all these, which might easily be multiplied, it is plain that there is an inclination to evil, not imaginary and metaphysical, but real and active, in the flesh of which we are born; that our state does not consist in a merely spiritual condition; that our spiritual condition is subjected, by the sin of man, to the power of another inclination or law, which dwells and works in the body of our natural flesh. In early times this truth was so deeply apprehended that some fell into the error of believing in the existence of two principles, good and evil; of which the one was in and of God, the other in and of the matter of the visible world. They believed matter to be unmixed evil; and rather than ascribe its origin to God, they supposed it to have its origin in another being, thereby destroying the unity of God's creation, and His monarchy over all things. I note this only because we seem, in a recoil from Manichæan errors, to have gone into the opposite extreme, and to treat the flesh as if it were not the subject of evil at all; as if sin lay only in our spiritual nature, and our probation were confined to the workings of the mind. If heretics of old abhorred matter and all contact with it as evil, we have come to be incredulous of the mysterious agency of evil which is in it; and in the conduct of our personal religion exclude it from our thoughts. If this were not so, how could we be so

ill-inclined to believe that the habit of fasting has a real and effective relation to the purifying of our souls? How could we slight it as a thing external, heterogeneous, and inactive in our sanctification? Many people formally reject the practice as a whole. Others are willing to admit it so far as to be a sort of public acknowledgment of the duty of humiliation: some as expressing, not as promoting, the contrition of the heart; that is, as a sign or symbol of what already exists, and is wrought by other agencies: not as a means, no less than an expression. That is to say, they treat fasting as others do the holy Sacraments, not as a means to effect an end, but as signs that the end has been already otherwise effected. This is surely a highly unscriptural view of the matter. How strained and unnatural it is to interpret St. Paul, when he says, "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth," or "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts,"[1] to mean, be careful to form inward habits of mental religion! And how shallow a knowledge does it imply of our wonderful and fearful nature: how secure and dangerous an unconsciousness of what we are! It is surely impossible for any one to reflect at all without perceiving the relation which exists between the habit of the body and the con-

[1] Gal. v. 24.

dition of the mind; between the workings of the flesh and the qualities of the soul. Besides these self-evident proofs, which the one word *sensuality* will suffice to shew, is it not manifest that the sins of anger, pride, hardness of heart, indolence, sloth, selfishness, are so closely related to the body that it is hard to say where they chiefly dwell, whether in the spirit or in the flesh? Does not the universal language of mankind connect them together? Does not the natural instinct of discerning the characters of men by outward tokens prove to us that, whether we will or no, we do associate the bodily and mental habits of men together? Does not a free, or a soft, or excessive course of life insensibly affect the whole character? Is not the tradition of mortification as universal as that of sacrifices, pointing to a truth to be afterwards revealed in the gospel? And what do all these things prove, but that the body, or, as holy Scripture says, the flesh, is the occasion, the avenue, the provoking, aggravating, sustaining cause of moral and spiritual evil in the soul? that it kindles and keeps alive the particular affections which, when consented to by the will, become our personal and actual sins? It follows, then, at once, that an external self-discipline, such as fasting, does enter into the means of our sanctification; that as the obstructions to penitence and purity of

heart arise chiefly out of sensuality, or indulgence of the affections and motions of the flesh or carnal mind, so a system which withdraws the excitements and contradicts their effects must tend to set the soul freer for its purely spiritual exercises. Let it be taken only as a removal of obstructing causes, and of intimate and subtil hindrances. This at least, upon the lowest ground, must be conceded. And yet it is hardly possible for any thoughtful person to rest satisfied with this imperfect view. The fasting of our blessed Lord was not a mere semblance; it was not an appearance, as the Docetæ believed His manhood itself to be—an unreal action, for the sake of leaving an example to us. Though He was all pure, and had in Him nothing that fasting could mortify, as He had nothing on which sin could lay its hold, yet, without doubt, even in His perfect and spotless humanity, abstinence had its proper work. "Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered;"[1] by that inscrutable mystery of suffering He tasted of sorrows, which in His impassible nature He could never receive into His Person. He was weary, faint, grieved, buffeted, and put to pain, even as we are: and these things on His humanity had the same effects as they have on ours. So, with-

[1] Heb. v. 8.

out doubt, in His fasting. What may have been its effects on the actings of His spotless soul in its aspect towards God, we dare not speculate ; but can we doubt that the fast of forty days had its own peculiar work in that perfect sympathy towards us, by which He is able to feel with us in our natural infirmities ? Was it not out of the same depth of experience that He spoke, when, as St. Mark writes, " In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat : and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way : for divers of them came from far."[1] May we not say, that He thereby made trial of such bodily infirmities as give to the poor, the sick, the self-denying, a peculiar share in His perfect sympathy ?

With us, however, fasting is a means of humiliation, abasement, repentance for the guilt of sins committed, and for the soils of sin which penetrate our inmost soul. To us sinners it is a sharp and necessary medicine to cleanse our hearts, to waken and excite devotion, to chasten and clear the spiritual affections towards God, and to humble our natural pride. These are its first and obvious uses.

[1] St. Mark viii. 1-3.

It also helps to form in us a pure and unselfish sympathy with the suffering members of Christ, in their patience and necessities, in their faintness and heavy toil, in the languor of sickness and feebleness of age. It is good for us to see our tables spread like a poor man's board; for many go from their birth to their grave and never know the taste of hunger. There are secrets of suffering into which not only the rich and soft, but even the charitable and pitiful, can never enter, except by self-denials, of which fasting is an example and a pledge.

3. And this leads us to the last point. It may be safely said, that without fasting and the habits implied in it, we shall hardly attain to any high degrees of the spiritual life. I would not be understood to say, that there are not to be found some who never fast, and are yet purer and more penitent than some who do: that is very certain. Some who fast seem not at all the better: rather, as has been said, they seem to grow less gentle, less self-mistrusting, less charitable,—more high-toned in their professions, projects, and censures.

Again: some who have never been taught to look upon fasting as a duty have gone through life without using it as a part of their personal religion, yet are nevertheless truly pious, gentle, and devout. But the question is rather to be stated

thus: seeing what they are without this scriptural practice, what would they have been if they had been early taught to use it? Surely we may believe they would, in all parts of a holy life, have outstripped their present selves. If they have come to be what they are without following this precept of our Lord's example, what might they not have attained by a fuller imitation of His life! For it is not to be denied, that there are, even among persons of a devout life, two very distinct classes. There is one which consists of people who are truly conscientious, faithful to the light that is in them, charitable, blameless, diligent in the usual means of grace, and visibly advanced in the practice and principle of a religious obedience. Yet there is something wanting. Their alms are given without the grace of charity: their consolations are not soothing. There is a want of sympathy, tenderness, meekness, reverence, submission of will, self-renouncement: sometimes there is a tone which is even selfish, imperious, heartless, or worldly.

The other class are perceptibly distinct; and their difference may be said to lie in the depth and vividness of their charity and compassion. They inspire no fear, except that which attends on great purity of life; they attract and win to themselves the love of others, especially of the

poor, the timid, the suffering, and even of children. There is about them something which is rather to be felt than defined. We feel ourselves to be in the presence of a superior, and yet of one who has nothing fearful or exciting, nothing that rudely abashes or repels us. We feel to be sensibly drawn to them, and to be thoroughly persuaded of their goodness and gentleness of heart. Though we know that our least faults will in their eyes seem greater than much graver faults in the eyes of others, yet we have less fear of making them known, because we feel sure of their tenderness and kind interpretation. Such they are in their aspect towards us. What is their devotion, as it is seen by God alone, we can only conjecture from the purity and intensity of all their spiritual life.

Now such characters as this certainly seem almost to differ in kind, rather than in degree, from the others. They have another pattern of devotion before them, and are under another discipline. Their self-control is perceptibly of a finer sort; the subjugation of their passions is evidently on a more perfect rule; and their devotion has a vividness and depth which the others do not possess. Now this seems to be the cast of character which is seldom, if ever, formed without an habitual exercise of secret humiliation. All that we

perceive of sympathy and gentleness is the result of contrition and self-chastisement before God. And this is wrought in them by a system of self-discipline, into which fasting seldom, if ever, fails to enter. Without this, and the kindred habits allied to it, there can be but little of that recollection of heart out of which comes a keener perception of the spirituality of the law of God, of the malign character of sin, or of the habitual consciousness of our own infinite unworthiness in the sight of Heaven. All these, which are the first principles of repentance and purification, are but faintly, if at all, apprehended by any but those who use in secret a discipline of self-chastisement; and all attempts at such discipline will be found, sooner or later, to be most imperfect, and indeed all but in vain, unless they are ordered on the rule which is here given by the example of our blessed Lord. Fasting and prayer are so related, that in their spirit, quality, and effect, they will rise or fall together; and fasting is so related to the spiritual cross of Christ, that we may believe it to possess virtues greater and more penetrating than we may ever know in this life.

Lastly, as to the particular rules by which this duty is to be limited and directed, I cannot attempt to say any thing; partly because it is hardly possible to be particular without provoking objec-

tions to the principle from those to whom the instances will not apply; and partly because, in such questions of personal religion, they who are not able to guide themselves ought to have recourse to their spiritual pastor. It is but to keep up a delusion, too prevalent already, to attempt to do by public preaching what can only be efficiently done, in particular cases, by private counsel and advice. I will therefore only venture on two suggestions.

One is, whatsoever be your practice, let it be without ostentation. "Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret." There are few that can stand being noticed, without suffering in the purity of their intention. Howsoever well they may have begun, secondary motives insinuate themselves with a strange subtilty. The comments of others, either by way of opposition, or, much more dangerously, of approval, seldom fail to produce an unhealthy self-consciousness which mars all, and then "verily we have our reward." Moreover, there is no reason why we should not carry our secret discipline with us into all paths and conditions of life. We may fast in the midst of the world, in its business and distractions, even when compelled to be present in the midst of its feastings. Let it be a matter between ourselves and God.

The other suggestion is, that we do not venture on any over-rigid practice at first. Excessive beginnings often end in miserable relaxations at last. Hardly any thing so much deteriorates the character as retracting good resolutions, or falling away from high professions. Little acts are great tests of self-control, steadiness, perseverance. Let us be content with these, and turn it to our humiliation that we are neither worthy nor able to undertake greater things. Higher rules of devotion are for those that are stronger than we. Let us ever bear in mind that all such practices are no more than means to an end. Let us never rest till that end is attained. And let us ever bear in mind that, fast and afflict ourselves as we may, there is only one "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," only one foundation, one sacrifice, one atonement for sin, which is the cross and blood-shedding of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON V.

THE NATURE AND LIMITS OF TEMPTATION.

St. Matthew iv. 1.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

This deeply mysterious passage of our Lord's humiliation can never be understood by us more than in part. It is full of truths only partially revealed; and, from our inability to comprehend them, we must refrain from offering too boldly to interpret the nature of His temptation.

Certain great truths, however, we may learn from what is here written. That same Spirit with Whom the Son of God was one from everlasting, and by Whom also He was anointed at His baptism, was here His guide to the place of His spiritual conflict with the Evil One. When it is said, He was led of the Spirit, it is to be understood in the same sense as when it is said, He was anointed,

tempted, and the like—the man Jesus Christ being susceptible of all these, by reason of His true and proper humanity. That same Spirit by which He was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor,[1] was also His guide in all that it behoved the Messiah to do and to suffer for the sin of the world. St. Paul tells us that it was "through the Eternal Spirit"[2] that He offered Himself to God; and that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"[3] that is to say, by the Divine Nature in which the Son and the Spirit are one and indivisible. Thus, through the Spirit He was led up of His own free will to be tempted of the devil. It was the onset of the warfare which was to end in the destruction of "him that hath the power of death."

There is an evident relation, partly of coincidence and partly of contrast, between the temptation of the first Adam in the garden, and of the second Adam in the wilderness. The first Adam was tempted through the senses, and by the allurements of self-exaltation, and covetousness of gifts which he did not possess. So with Christ: He was tempted to satisfy His hunger by a miracle; to display His divine nature, by suspending the laws which govern our state, to which He had made

[1] Isaiah lxi. 1. [2] Heb. ix. 14. [3] Rom. i. 4.

Himself subject, and to forsake His Father for the offer of earthly greatness. In the two first temptations it does not at once appear in what the sin to which He was tempted consists. It may be that Satan sought for proof that He was the very Christ, and that he hoped either to destroy or to draw Him from God. His temptations were therefore put in a tone of incredulity and provocation, like that of the rulers who derided Him upon the cross, saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save: let Him save Himself, if He be the Christ, the chosen of God:" and the malefactor also who "railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us."[1] These words express a great depth of contumely, mixed with incredulity and fear. It would appear that Satan half knew and half feared lest He were the Christ, and so shaped the temptations as to goad Him, as he thought, into a manifestation of Himself, and in ways that would destroy the pure integrity of His obedience to God. The temptation lay not so much in the particular form, as in the moral character and effect of the act. So it was in the first temptation of man: the act was in itself, it may be, indifferent; the spring of it was disobedience, and the end was death. In this instance it would have been a renouncing of subjection to His Father,

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 35, 39.

and a defeat of the ends for which He had become incarnate.

Now, this temptation in the wilderness was a part of the humiliation of the Son of God. As He took our nature with all its infirmities, it was needful that He should make full trial of our state. As He prayed, wept, and hungered, so also He was tempted. It belonged to the truth of our nature, and to the realities of our state in this world of sin, that He should suffer as we suffer. And this is specially mentioned by St. Paul, who encourages us by saying that He "was in all points tempted like as we are."[1] It was needful that He should learn by experience the full misery and hatefulness of sin, and the weakness and susceptibility of our nature: for this even the Omniscient, because of the perfection of His own nature, learned "by the things which He suffered." What humiliation can be greater than that He "who cannot be tempted with evil," should be solicited by the horrible and hateful suggestions of mistrustful, presumptuous, self-exalting thoughts, and that with the taunts and allurements of the devil? What is more afflicting to holy minds than the haunting suggestions or visions of evil? And yet surely no such trial was ever so afflicting to any other as to the Holy One of God. The absolute holiness of the Godhead

[1] Heb. iv. 15.

was then brought into contact with sin, as the divine immortality was brought into the neighbourhood of death upon the cross. It is impossible for us to measure the intense humiliation and spiritual anguish of such a familiarity with the Wicked One. None but God, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, can know the hatefulness of sin as it was manifested to Christ, or the depth of sorrow and abhorrence which was excited in the soul of Him who was without sin.

Again: this temptation, it may be, was as necessary to our redemption as the Passion upon the cross. It was parallel to the temptation of Adam in Eden in this point, that as he by falling subjected us to sin and death, so Christ by overcoming has delivered us from the same. The first Adam was our head unto condemnation; the Second is our Head unto everlasting life. Now it is to be observed, that our Lord was tempted as a man, and as a man He overcame. He did not put forth divine powers of miracle, nor support Himself by divine interpositions. He might, indeed, have let loose twelve legions of angels against the tempter; but how then should He have been the example and pledge of mastery to us that are tempted? His victory over the devil was gained by the preparations of prayer and fasting, and by the power of patience and stedfast obedience to God. The

same shield, and the same weapons of offence, we also possess. His mastery was gained, as His temptation was endured, strictly within the conditions of our humanity.

That this conflict was complete is evident from the fact, that though St. Luke says Satan "departed from Him *for a season*," we no where read that our blessed Lord was ever again solicited by his allurements. He was buffeted and blasphemed by the malignity of the devil; contradicted and pursued by the hatred of men; all the powers of darkness were in activity against Him; yet we no where find that He was again tempted to withdraw His obedience from His Father in heaven. Even in the last night of agony in the garden, in the midst of exhaustion, fear, and anguish, when the tempter might have seemed to have found a season of peculiar weakness, he did not appear: his work lay elsewhere; he was busied in another direction. He had compassed the death of Him whom he could not overcome; he had "entered into the heart of Judas;" he was counter working, as it might seem, to destroy One whom he could not defile. Now this perfect overthrow of Satan, by a person in our nature, is a mystery out of which our masteries over temptation are derived, as our falls are derived out of the first transgression. Christ has overcome for us; and by virtue

of our union with Him, He daily overcomes Satan in and through our regenerate nature, and therein perpetually repeats and carries out His first mastery in the wilderness. It was this great warfare and victory that St. John saw in vision. "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."[1] Apostles, prophets, martyrs, and saints, all the members of His mystical body, became partakers of His mastery over the kingdom of darkness, and over the devil, the prince of this world. So, through persecution, and distress, and torment, in the provinces and cities of the world, in market-places and theatres, in the wilderness and in soli-

[1] Rev. xii. 7-11.

tude, they overcame the strength and the subtilty of the tempter; and in weakness confounded his power whom all the world worshipped.

This temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ lays open to us the reality and nature of our own. It lifts the veil which is upon our eyes, the unconsciousness which is upon our hearts, and shews us what is really going on at all times in the spiritual world around us; by what we are beset, and what are the mysterious powers which are exerting themselves upon us. Much that we never suspect to be more than the effect of chance, or hazard, or the motion of our own minds, or the caprice of fancy, may be the agency of this same awful being who tempted both the first Adam and the Second. There is something very fearful in the thought that Satan, whom we so slight or forget, is an angel—a spiritual being of the highest order—endowed therefore with energies and gifts of a superhuman power; with intelligence as great as his malice; lofty, majestic, and terrible even in his fall. Next to the holy angels, what being can it be more fearful to have opposed to us, and that with intense and vigilant enmity, and at all times hovering invisibly about us?

From what we read, then, of the temptation of Christ we may learn:

1. First, that it is no sin to be tempted; nor

is our being tempted any proof of our being sinful. This is a most consolatory thought; for among the afflictions of life few are so bitter and perpetual as temptation. Sorrows, pains, disappointments, crosses, oppositions, which come upon us from without, are not to be compared in suffering to the inward distress of being tempted to evil deeds, words, desires, and thoughts. The subtilty and insinuation of evil is so great that it gains an entrance before we are aware of it: sometimes it seems to glance off by a sort of reflection from things the most opposite in their nature; sometimes to be taken into our minds unperceived in the midst of indifferent thoughts, and then suddenly to unfold itself. Every one who is seeking for Christian perfection must have found how thoughts of resentment, pride, self-complacency, repining, and others unholier still, sometimes seem to shoot off from the holiest acts and contemplations, and again to spring up out of subjects of the greatest purity and humiliation; sometimes also in times of deep sorrow and depression, when our minds are most remote from any conscious indulgence of their own evil. This, and much more which is implied by this, will be recognised by all who are seeking after holiness; and it is this that causes the bitterest and most sickening distress of mind. Sometimes it makes us doubt of our whole religious life—

almost of our regeneration. Am I not even yet in the flesh, "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity?" can I dare to pray? is not even prayer a mere profession? how can I approach God with a soul haunted and darkened by such a presence of evil? It is, indeed, well to be suspicious and self-accusing; for there can be no doubt but that most of our mental temptations find their opportunity in actual faults, past or present, or in that original taint of sin which is still in us: that is to say, in those parts of our nature which are the effects of the fall of man, and of our own personal disobedience. But the susceptibility of temptation belongs to us, not as fallen beings, but as men. Perfect beings may be tempted, as the angels: and sinless, as Adam in the garden, Christ in the wilderness.

So long as we are in this state of probation, and in this world of conflict between sin and holiness, it must be so. Even though we were made sinless at this very hour, still the power and subtilty of evil by which we are surrounded would not cease to approach us, and to force itself upon our perception and our hatred. Thus much we may learn for our comfort: though we should convert it into a snare, if we were to solve the fact of our daily consciousness of evil thoughts and inclinations by this truth alone. It is too true that, for the most part, we are

tempted because we have aggravated and inflamed our original sinfulness. We by disobedience have given to it a vividness and appetite which by nature it did not possess. Old thoughts, wishes, associations, practices, are the source of most of our inward defilements. To our natural susceptibility and our original corruption we have added an immeasurable range of inclinations to things forbidden; and on these Satan fastens. However, we may take this comfort: after we have assured ourselves by strict self-examination that the temptation by which we are distressed is not the result of any act of our own will, we may rest in peace, thanking God for the pain it inflicts upon us, praying Him to make that pain, if He sees fit, sharper and deeper, that it may issue in an intense hatred of evil, in a more vivid consciousness of our own misery, in lower humiliation, and greater purity of heart. Any suffering is to be welcomed which teaches us sorrow and hatred for sin. In this way temptations are turned by the Holy Spirit against themselves. That which in its first intention would be the defilement, if not the death, of the soul, turns to chastisement, mortification, and cleansing. It wakens and quickens all the powers of the soul; fear, self-restraint, watchfulness, caution, sensitive shrinking from the least appearance of evil, strong and persevering efforts to deaden and destroy so much as the

very liability to be affected by temptations. So it was with the Corinthians to whom St. Paul said: "Behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."[1] The very sorrow and distress are our safeguard. We should be in danger if we did not feel them; and we are safer as we feel them more acutely, and use them for our humiliation and spiritual cleansing.

2. Another truth following on the last is, that nothing can convert a temptation into a sin but the consent of our own will. This one principle, clearly seen, is a key to nine-tenths of all questions of conscience on this subject. The worst of temptations, so long as they are without our will, are no part of us: by consent they become adopted and incorporated with our spiritual nature—thoughts become wishes, and wishes intents. Consent is the act of the whole inward man. So long as we refuse to yield, it matters little what temptations beset us; they may distress and darken, and even for a time seem to defile our hearts: but they cannot overcome us. The thought of satisfying

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 11.

His natural hunger, of vindicating His divine Sonship by miracles, the visions of this false world, the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, were cast like shadows on the clear brightness of our Lord's spirit; but they won no assent, left no traces, no deposit of doubt, desire, or inclination. They were simply hateful, and were cast forth with an intense rejection; and that because they encountered a holy will, which is of divine strength even in man.

In measure it is so in every saint; it may be so with us. As the will is strengthened with energy, and upheld by the presence of Christ dwelling in the heart of the pure and lowly; so the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, are expelled from us, and lose all share in our personal existence. This explains the various degrees of power that temptations have over various men. Some seem never mastered by them, some seldom, some often, and some always. Of the first we have spoken enough. The others will be found in two classes: they are either those who, without positive habits of sin, are also without positive habits of holiness; or those whose habits are positively unholy. When I say, those who, without positive habits of sin, are also without positive habits of holiness, I mean, such persons as are pure in their lives, benevolent, upright, and amiable, but not

devout towards God. This in itself is of course, in one sense, sin, because it is a coming "short of the glory" and acceptance of God. I am using 'sin' in its popular sense, of wilful acts of evil. Now such people are open to the full incursions of the tempter in the whole extent of that natural sinfulness which is in them. This gives them a predisposition on which he acts with daily success. They are open and unguarded, and the will that is in them is weak and undisciplined; it has no expulsive power in it, by which evil is cleared from a heart that is sanctified by a life of holiness. We see such people become inconsistent, vain, ostentatious, worldly, and then designing, farsighted for their own interests, selfish, unscrupulous, false to their friends, their principles, their professions. We are surprised by unexpected acts out of keeping with what we believe them to be, and lines of practice in direct opposition to plain and evident duty. The key of all this is, that they have secretly yielded their will to some temptation, and converted it into their own sin; and that sin is their master. We sometimes see such people deteriorating with a frightful intensity and speed; so much so as to make us remember how awfully the emptiness and preparedness of an undevout heart is described by our Lord. The unclean spirit "saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out;

and when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there."[1]

The case is, of course, much more obviously true of those who live lives of positive unholiness. Every sin that a man commits is an invitation to the tempter to tempt him thenceforward to that particular sin. So that every man of a profligate life is the subject of a manifold temptation, which is perpetually multiplying itself. First he is tempted of his own heart, then by Satan, then by consent he tempts Satan to tempt him again in the same forms, circumstances, and details; for by consent he has made that his master-sin. And thenceforward it becomes, as we say, a ruling sin, which is so seldom broken off that St. Peter says of certain, that they have "eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin."[2] They have an active commerce with the tempter, a mingling of will and desire with him; and the inflammation and power of evil affections become a bondage through which it becomes at last morally impossible to break. And how does this differ from a possession of the devil? Is it not a possession in all the reality of fact and truth? How did Satan enter into the heart of Judas with any fuller or more

[1] St. Matt. xii. 44, 45. [2] 2 St. Peter ii. 14.

personal presence than this? How can we otherwise explain the settled, deliberate career of sin in which some men live—the perfect impenetrableness of heart and conscience with which they hold out against all warnings, fears, and chastisements; as, for instance, in sensuality, falsehood, or pride?

This, then, is the sum of the matter: temptations are no sins so long as we keep our will pure from all consent to them; when we consent, they become sins, are infused into our spiritual nature, and are the first admissions of that which in the end may be no less than a possession.

3. And this leads to one point more—I mean, to the nature and limits of the power of temptation. First, it is plain that Satan has no power over the will of man except through itself. It must be won by self-betrayal, or not at all. This is absolutely certain, and lies at the root of the distinction between obedience and disobedience, holiness and sin. Next, it would appear that he can have no direct power over the affections. He must approach them, as they lie round the will, through the eye and the ear, the touch or the imagination. Through the senses, the avenues of temptation are ready and direct; and all the world around us ministers to danger. Therefore our Lord was so searching in His commands to pluck out the of-

fending eye, and to cut off the offending hand. The first visible objects which Satan used to tempt withal were pure creatures of God, the fruit of the tree which God had blessed. So subtil is evil. But since he gained an entrance into the creation of God, he has, through the will and works of wicked men, framed for himself a world of his own, full of the visible forms and suggestions of pride, lust, impurity, covetousness. What else are idolatries, oracles, licentious ceremonies, lying books, unholy sights, pomps, and wars; or, again, false casuistry, sceptical and defiling literature, luxurious arts, worldly grandeur, and the like? And these things find their way into all eyes and ears, and are quickened by the craft and activity of men already corrupt. This world of evil hangs upon us round about, and through it he insinuates the quality of evil into the affections, and by them sways and possesses the will.

And again: we cannot doubt that he has still more concealed ways of addressing himself to us. He is a spirit, and we are of a spiritual nature. It is impossible to limit or define the action of intellect on intellect, and imagination on imagination. There are some temptations so peculiar, so sudden, so abrupt in their onset, so contrary to our natural and habitual bias, so disturbing and vehement in their first entrance on the mind, that

we can hardly doubt that the tempter has a direct avenue to the intellectual and imaginative powers of our nature: for instance, religious delusions, in which he appears as an angel of light to the perverted mind. There is, by the common consent of man, such a thing as the direct instigation of the devil, which, though its means of working may be generally through the senses, we cannot doubt is also a work of direct and disembodied evil. Such, for instance, as the unaccountable desire to commit great and eccentric crimes; sudden impulses to do things most feared and hated, concurring with an opportunity unperceived till the impulse detected it. Now though these are extreme cases, and such as we are not commonly exposed to, they lay open a law, so to speak, of temptation which has place in our common life. I mean, the direct power and agency of Satan on the imagination. It is not necessary now to go further, or to inquire whether the images of the mind of which he serves himself are gathered from the ideas of previous experience, or suggested, new and unknown, from without. All that we are concerned with now is, to shew that he has no hold over the will, nor power over the affections, except through the images of the senses and of the mind. And this is a most consolatory and a most practical truth. It shews us our perfect safety so long as the Spirit of Christ

dwells in our hearts: and it teaches us where to watch against the approaches of the tempter.

Let us pray, then, that our eyes, ears, and all senses be mortified; that the cross be upon them all; that no images of pomp, vanity, or lust may pass through them into the affections of our hearts; that no visions of sins past, nor remembrance of any thing that can kindle pride, anger, resentment, or any unholy passion, may haunt us; that our will may be dwelt in by the will of our sinless Lord, who for us overcame in the wilderness, and, if we be pure and true, will "bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

SERMON VI.

WORLDLY CARES.

St. Matthew iv. 3.

"When the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

When our Lord had fulfilled the forty days of His miraculous fast, "He was afterward an hungered." He felt at that moment, more than all the sensations of languor and exhaustion to which long abstinence from food commonly brings our nature. It was a time of peculiar weakness, when, if ever, the tempter might hope to have advantage of this mysterious Person. When he came to Him, therefore, he took up the words which fell from heaven at His baptism. He said, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." It seems to have been partly for the sake of finding out what He truly was, and partly to prepare the way for other and worse suggestions. We cannot

say how far Satan knew with Whom he had to do. Probably he could only gather His real nature by the manifestations which were revealed in this world. The tempter had, we may believe, no knowledge derived from his own intelligence who this mysterious servant of God might be. He was no longer privy to the secrets of Heaven; and no revelations in the unseen world had made him a partaker in those "things which the angels desire to look into." His knowledge, it seems, was to be gathered from tokens and intimations given to mankind; as, the vision and song of the heavenly host at His birth, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, with the Father's voice at Jordan. And here he came to put all this to the test, and to elicit something more. He came seeking a sign; and that sign, first of all, was a miracle, to be wrought by Christ upon the stones of the wilderness, to stay His hunger. But He who had compassion on the faintness of the multitude would not regard Himself. They had been with Him only three days, and He had fasted forty; but He would not outrun His Father's time, or change His Father's way. He knew, it would seem, that in the end of His temptation, when He had borne it all, and accomplished the mysterious conflict, there should come ministering angels to His succour.

But my object is not so much to enter upon the

detail of this temptation, and to explain its circumstances, as to use it for our own instruction.

It may be taken as a sample of a class of temptations to which some of us are especially liable. In our Lord's hunger we may see a type of the straits and necessities into which we sometimes fall in our worldly condition; and in the temptation of Satan an example of the unlawful and indirect ways in which men are tempted to escape from them. In one word, it may be taken as a sample of the temptations which beset those who have the part of Martha, who live in the world, charged with its temporal duties and cares, who have to provide for their own living, and for the support of others who belong to them. Our Lord's conduct is an example of trust in the providential care of God, and of the duty of abstaining from all unsanctioned ways of providing for ourselves. We will go on to consider this subject somewhat more fully.

1. And first of all, this shews us the sin of seeking our livelihood in any unlawful ways. This is a subject on which the consciences of men are sometimes strangely blind. The pressure of want, the encumbrances and difficulties of an embarrassed fortune, the needs of others that depend on them, are very strong and urgent reasons for great and laborious efforts to obtain a maintenance in the world. And these are often much increased in

the case of those who are, or have been, richer, whose birth lifts them above the lower kinds of employment and of temptation, and over whom the habits and expectations of society cast a powerful influence. What is more strongly felt and declared than that—"A man must live; I cannot afford to throw away any means of subsistence, or any office of emolument. If I could do so in my own person, I cannot for the sake of others. If I had nobody to think of but myself, I might withdraw from this, or abandon that, employment. Besides, the Bible tells us, 'If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'[1] It is not more a duty of reason than of religion."

Let it be observed, I am not speaking of acts of direct robbery,—stealing, fraud, peculation, nor of the ruder or more naked forms of dishonesty by which needy men are often tempted to seek their living in unlawful ways; nor of gambling and living by chance, and the like:—all these are self-evidently wicked; but of a finer class of temptations. Sometimes men of a high-toned profession in life allow themselves to participate in trades, speculations, undertakings, which are perhaps connived at by those who execute the laws of the land, though they are forbidden by the laws themselves;

[1] 1 Tim. v. 8.

or they consciously suffer profits to be made over to them which they know are not their due. They let others make mistakes against themselves without setting them right; they leave them under false impressions of the value of things which pass between them by way of sale; they let mistaken notions, arising from their own words, remain uncorrected; or by acts they imply, in matters of business, what they would not say. They are willing to be parties, if it so happen, to unequal bargains; or they are not considerate of the quality of those they treat with, or of their ability to protect themselves; or they conceal knowledge which would change the whole intention of those they deal with, while they themselves act upon it. Many of these things have no distinct names. They are practised —I will not say, permitted—in commerce and trade by a sort of lax interpretation of duty; and though not pronounced to be fair, are nevertheless treated as if they were the necessary fortunes of offensive and defensive warfare, which the buyers and sellers, and merchants, and money-changers, and traffickers of this world are compelled to carry on and to submit to. The market, and the exchange, and the receipt of custom, are perilous places, having an atmosphere of their own; and in it things are strangely refracted: precepts and obligations are often seen edgeways, or sideways, or

inverted altogether. Or, again, the finer forms of integrity are dimly seen, and treated as visionary, unpractical, inapplicable to the affairs of the world; and a peculiar sort of character is formed, which is long-sighted, far-reaching, ready, sharp, dexterous, driving, successful. All things seem to turn in their direction; and they are prepared for every fluctuation, reaction, and change. Now it is very seldom that such men persevere in strict integrity. The temptations to make great gains by slight equivocations, and the manifold and complex nature of the transactions they are engaged in, give so many facilities for turning things unduly to their own advantage, that many fall.

The same may be said, also, of those who obtain the means of life by compromises of opinion and of principle, by slight suppressions of conscience, and tampering with their own sincerity. All these are so many forms of commanding stones to be made bread. They are a withdrawal of trust in the providence of God, who never forsakes those who look simply to Him, and persevere in their own pure intention of heart, in spite of golden opportunities and alluring offers of gain. We read in the book of Proverbs, "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent."[1] And why, but because a precipitate following of wealth makes

[1] Prov. xxviii. 20.

men bold, speculating, unscrupulous? They are not nice in their measures if there seems a chance of success. They follow up their points with an urgency that leaves them too little time to scrutinise the means: indeed, the means seem to force themselves upon their hands. Many a great fortune will bear little scrutiny or retrospect. It must be looked at only on the outside, and under the fair aspect of its present appearance.

But we may dismiss these examples, hoping that they, though too often seen, are not of very frequent occurrence, and go on to a more common temptation.

2. We may learn, then, further, the sin of seeking our living in any way which implies mistrust of God's care for us. It is most certain that, in our lawful calling, we may be exposed to this temptation. We may be tempted not only to mistrust the providence of God, but also to endeavour to secure ourselves, by our own foresight and management, against the surprises of want and the changes of worldly fortune.

And this we may do, for instance, by hoarding. Now here is an acknowledged difficulty. Holy Scripture says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise;"[1] which seems to teach us that it is a duty to be both diligent and

[1] Prov. vi. 6.

foresighted: to lay up for dark days and wintry seasons. So, indeed, it is; and all the more as we have others to care for. Yet it is plain that this must have its limit. Holy Scripture, while it sends us for wisdom to the ant, forbids greediness, warns us against love of riches, condemns covetousness. We read: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows;"[1] again: "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;"[2] and our Lord teaches the same in the awful parable of the rich man, who said, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"[3] Now that which is condemned in these passages is a hoarding spirit, which is excited and kept alive by a desire

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. [2] Eph. v. 5.

[3] St. Luke xii. 18-20.

to secure ourselves against all contingencies of God's providence; as if men should lay in stores, and provision a stronghold, against the invasions of God. This is the "trusting in uncertain riches, and not in the living God,"[1] which St. Paul condemns. Men that leave all thought of God out of their calculation when they are making a fortune, inevitably shut out all thought of His future providence in their schemes for securing the fortune they have made. They begin in an unthankful, self-trusting way, and they end in relying upon their own prudence and worldly wisdom. This is a mere trying to make stones into bread. They are no safer from poverty than the poorest: no more secure from hunger, nakedness, destitution, than the man that cannot reckon pence against their thousands of gold and silver. Both rich and poor depend for the morrow equally upon God. It is not in the power of man to make himself more secure. He will have just so much as God wills, and he will hold it just so long. A frugal man who lives of what God gives him, and disposes wisely of the rest, distributing part to others, and laying up such a proportion as may remain, subject to such uses and demands as God may design—he is safer far than the richest, whose yearly hoardings cannot be told: for a trust in

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 17.

the Father of lights shall never be disappointed. It contains in it the virtues of the treasuries of heaven. Out of these there shall be ministered an abundant store, when the money-bags of the rich shall be unawares found empty. This, then, is an evident temptation. It is an unbelieving mistrust of God, and an over-confident trust in ourselves.

Another particular form of the same temptation is, to withhold our alms from the poor and destitute, under a plea that we must be provident for ourselves. There is something shocking in the very statement. And yet it is to be feared that there are persons who refuse all applications for alms of all kinds, both for the bodies and for the souls of men, on the plea that they cannot afford it; that "charity begins at home," and the like. They do so in the belief that what they save in this manner is laid up in store for their own future security, forgetting that they thereby rob God of His due; that they tempt Him in a high degree to strip them of the wealth they use so unworthily; that they provoke Him to send the moth, and the canker, and the rust, to eat away their stored treasures, and to leave them naked and poor. There are, I say, some people who systematically refuse all alms, especially those that are asked of them for spiritual mercy, for the spreading of Christ's king-

dom by missions among the heathen, and for the ministry of repentance among our outcast and fallen people.

But we must not limit what has been said to those that absolutely refuse to give alms at all. There are others, making up indeed the greater part of society, who do give, but upon no rule of proportion to their wealth. They give in all forms of charity sums incalculably small compared with the outlay made upon themselves, their dwellings, families, tables, pursuits, refinements. They stint themselves in nothing so much as in almsgiving. When they make retrenchments, it is with their alms that they begin. It is here they first feel the pinch of poverty. Their charities are cut down first. What would they not give to the poor, or to the work of the Church, if only they had the means; if only their ability were as large as their compassion! And yet, perhaps, they never give an entertainment to their rich friends and neighbours at less cost than their whole year's charity. They live up to their income in every thing else. It is in the fifth or tenth which they might give back to God, that they begin their provident economy, and lay up for themselves hereafter that which is due to Christ's poor now. What ought to be the bread of the hungry, they turn into a stone: and so in the day of their own necessity they will find it.

And to take one more instance: What is the anxious carefulness by which the majority of men are beset, but the same temptation? God has passed His word that they shall not lack; but they cannot wait His time, nor leave in His hands the way. They charge themselves with the two-fold work both of their own labour and of His providence. And they leave nothing undone or untried to lift themselves above the danger of being poor. Early and late, by day and by night, waking and sleeping, their whole powers are centred in the one thought, dream, desire, and toil, to secure themselves from being poor. Now there is no fault to be found with industry. Rather it is to be commended; but it is the carefulness, the anxiety, the furrows on the brow, the foreboding in the heart, the undue magnitude, in their esteem, of the things of this world, the faint faith in God, and the habitual reliance on their own management —this is the thing to be lamented and reproved.

It seems as if the Divine providence had a peculiar chastisement for those that will not trust simply in Him. Wealth ill gotten soon perishes: goods heaped up by unrighteousness waste away: storehouses filled in forgetfulness of God are soon emptied: riches not sanctified by alms eat themselves through:—worldly carefulness is a spend-thrift after all. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts,

Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. . . . Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. . . . One came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; . . one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty."[1] So certain it is, that they who attempt by worldly prudence and selfish forethought to secure to themselves the bread of this life, withdraw their faith from God, and forfeit His favour and benediction; and in this loss lose all.

Now this suggests to us what may be called two great laws of God's providential kingdom.

(1.) The first is, that all sustenance of life is as absolutely in His gift as life itself. Whatsoever He has created He still sustains "by the word of His power." "In Him all things consist." The power which conserves the state of the world and the teeming life which is in it is His. All creatures, animate and inanimate, are sustained by Him. All this we know; but, like all other great laws, it is too broad for us. We cannot, though weak-

[1] Haggai i. 5, 6, 9; and ii. 16.

ness of faith, bring it into the particulars of our daily life; especially as in our case it admits of being interwoven with the moral action and probation of mankind. There is hardly any thing that men so much affirm in theory, and so much contradict in practice. It is in the mouth of every miser, hoarder, and worldling; yet their whole life is a direct denial of it. When our Lord said, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" and again: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you;"[1] if our Lord, when He said this, had intended any conditions, restrictions, qualifications, to be put upon His meaning, He would, doubtless, have put them Himself. What He intends us, therefore, to understand is, first, that we ought not to busy ourselves

[1] St. Matthew vi. 25, 26, 31-33.

and to bestow care and attention on the clothing and nourishing of the body; and next, that whatever is needful God will give us. It is clear, then, that we have no warrant from this to look for superfluous indulgences, for needless provisions to sustain an artificial state in life, or to keep up an appearance which is assumed by our own choice, and out of deference to the customs of men or the pomp of the world. But we have a most certain warrant to believe that we shall never want what is really necessary for us. In giving us the breath of life, He gave us a pledge of the sustenance required for it. And this extends beyond our own persons to all who depend on us, such as children, servants, and others whom the providence of God has committed to us. So long as it is His will that we should exist in this earthly life, we have a certain promise and pledge that He will, in ways known to Himself, provide for us all necessary things. There seem to be only two conditions of this promise: first, that we seek it from Him in the measure and proportion that befits us; and next, that we labour diligently in the calling He appoints for us. If we be peasants, we must not look for the fare of princes; nor if our lot be plain, must we expect or desire to live freely and be clad in soft clothing as they that are in kings' palaces. And again: labour is the condition of man since the

fall. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;" "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."[1] And this most righteous penalty, like sin itself, has penetrated every state of life. It is not the tiller of the earth only, but the princes of this world likewise, who feel its power. The ground that was cursed is the whole sphere of man's mortal life and labour; all his employments, business, studies, callings, undertakings, the whole range of his toil in his personal and social state. Care and weariness, disappointment and the sweat of his face, are the conditions of all the works of man, both in body and in mind, whether he be learned or unlearned, whether he be lord or serf, ruled or ruler, buyer or seller, merchant or craftsman, teacher or learner, bishop or doctor, pastor or penitent, husband or wife, master or servant. To labour and to be lowly, to eat his bread in weariness and by measure, is his portion; but in lowliness and in labour shall be his rest. God will provide. "His bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure." "I have been young, and now am old; and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread."[2] To those, then, who faithfully do the work which God has appointed them, and keep within the sphere and

[1] Genesis iii. 19. [2] Psalm xxxvii. 25.

range where He has cast their lot, this great law of God's kingdom is pledged and sure. They shall never want whatsoever is needful, safe, and expedient for their support, and for the maintenance of all that legitimately falls within the condition assigned to them by the will of God.

(2.) The other great law I referred to is this, that the most truly expedient course is often one which is most inexpedient according to the measures of the world. What but this does the example of our Lord teach us, Who in His hunger refused to relieve His wants and faintness by the speaking of a word? How does the world oppress a man with its exhortations to "spare himself," to take advantage of natural powers, to seize on opportunities, to reap the benefit of great offers, to shew himself to the world, to let himself be made popular, to get on in life, and to make himself a name, a house, or a fortune! And how does it lament, or expostulate, or reproach him, if he refuse to turn these stones into bread! "So long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak well of thee."[1] But if a man turn away from money, ease, comfort, or competency, and the like, he is straightway improvident, reckless, eccentric, or ostentatious, fanciful, or proud. Nothing the world resents more than scrupulousness in money-getting.

[1] Psalm xlix. 18.

It is a very searching and wide-spread rebuke. One such man, by one such act, before he is aware, pricks the conscience of half the neighbourhood. The world cannot endure to be slighted, to be held cheap, to be valued at its own true price. Therefore, in self-defence, it keeps up a loud and plausible worship of expediency; and because what is right is always expedient, by a cunning sleight it sets forward what is expedient as the index of what is right. Now, nothing can be more contrary to this philosophy than to decline great stations, rich offers, large trusts, profitable employments; or again, to make costly offerings, to give great alms, to lay by little, to aim at extensive works. But what says Holy Writ, that true and only philosophy of human life? "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."[1] There are two kinds of lenders, two kinds of usury, two great debtors who take up the gold and silver of men—the world and God. The more men invest in the world, the more they lose; the more they lay up, the more they waste; the more they hoard, the more they squander. It "tendeth to poverty." Great figures, vast credit, thousands by the year, and the man is none the richer; he is not wiser, better, happier, healthier,

[1] Prov. xi. 24.

safer from ruin, poverty, destitution. His great barks founder in a calm; or the mountain of his wealth is driven away in an hour, "as a rolling thing before the whirlwind." Or, let all these prosper to the full; let all his rich cargoes come into the haven, and all his ventures turn in the mart to gold, he can neither eat nor drink, nor in any way enjoy, more than the poor man at his gate. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."[1] The world is a false-hearted debtor, paying not only no usury on its loans, but restoring nothing again. All that it borrows, it consumes "upon its lusts;" and all that it gives to its creditors is tinsel, and noise, and flatteries.

Not so with God. The only sure investment for our worldly goods is in works of mercy to the poor of Christ. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and look, what he

[1] Eccles. v. 10-13.

layeth out, it shall be paid him again." "Whosoever shall give to drink a cup of cold water in My name shall in no wise lose his reward."[1] The whole history of the Church is witness. Who made such gains as they that sold all they had, and gave to the poor, that they might bear their cross in following the Lord? Who found houses and lands an hundredfold, but they that forsook all to follow Him? What was it that brought in the gold and silver, and lands and goods of the earth, without measure, to the use and service of the Church, but the first great venture of faith, the first full and confiding investment which they made in the beginning who "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need;"[2] or being "possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need?"[3] It was the voluntary poverty of the first Christians that endowed the Church. We live of their usury, and on the profits of their investment. The land of Barnabas has borne the tithe of Christendom. I am not now speaking of the lasting returns which are laid up in heaven "in bags that wax not old;" I am speaking strictly

[1] St. Mark ix. 41. [2] Acts ii. 45. [3] Acts iv. 34.

of this world. And it is most true to say, that they will find at last the best return of all their ventures who go counter to the false expediency of this scheming, calculating world, and lay out their incomes with a thankful and trustful heart for the service of God and the consolation of His poor. When the prophet came to Sarepta, he asked food, in a time of famine, of a lone widow, who had a son depending on her; both were ready to perish. In her barrel was a handful of meal, in her cruse a little oil. Yet the prophet said, "Make me a little cake *first*, and *after* that make for thee and for thy son."[1] What request could be more untimely, exacting, unreasonable? Was she not a widow, and her son an orphan, and both destitute? Must she not first care for her own child, especially in a time of famine? So the world would argue; and for its reward receive an empty barrel and a dry cruse.

To conclude, then; let us ever bear in mind that the probation of many men lies, for the greatest part, in the matter of their temporal affairs; in the way in which they seek gain, and use the goods and possessions of the world. Their chief dangers arise from the largeness of their personal wants, and the scale they have pitched for their appearance in the sight of the world. When once men have com-

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 13.

mitted themselves too far in this point, it becomes every day more difficult to withdraw; and then they are put to all manner of expedients, shifts, and schemes, to maintain themselves in their position. This drives them into ambiguous lines of business, and into acts of an equivocal meaning; slight, it may be, at first, but by degrees enlarging into a wide surface of dangerous practice, and into concealed embarrassment. Money is the poison of thousands, whose character, in other respects, is high and admirable. It is strange over what minds money keeps its hold; and how near a man may go to moral greatness, and yet be crippled and stunted by this one passion. Money is his measure; and with all his gifts and enlarged views of mind, and his almost great points of character in other respects, money ascertains the real standard of his moral being. Beware, then, of money, and the desire for it, of carefulness and mistrust of God. Give alms of all that ye possess. Labour in your lot, be content with such things as ye have, and be careful for nothing. He who fasted in the wilderness, and for the five thousand made five loaves to be enough, is with you. He will feed you with the bread that came down from heaven, even that meat "which the Son of man shall give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed."[1]

[1] St. John vi. 27.

SERMON VII.

SPIRITUAL PRESUMPTION.

St. Matthew iv. 5-7.

"Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

There seems to be a manifold cunning in this invitation of the tempter. "He setteth Him upon the pinnacle of the temple," from which no mere man could cast himself and live. He bade Him cast Himself down; scheming either to destroy the person of the Son of God, or to discover His character and power. And yet he so shaped his proposal as to insinuate an imagination of intense spiritual evil.

The pretext suggested in this temptation by

the devil to our Lord was, that the Sonship of the true Messiah and the promises of God were a pledge to secure Him from all evil. "'If Thou be the Son of God,' He will take care of Thee: His angels shall bear Thee up." From this we may gather what was the evil to which Satan tempted the Saviour of the world. It appears to suggest a presumptuous dependence on God in things where He has not promised to extend it: and a consequent presumption in running into dangers. And this, after all, will be found to resolve itself into a temptation to self-confidence. "If Thou be the Son of God:" this was the chief plea. 'If Thou be, all must be safe to Thee. Ministering angels wait upon Thee. Nothing can work Thee harm.'

We may take this as a type of a very subtil and dangerous class of temptations; those, I mean, which beset persons of a truly religious life. When people have lived for many years in the daily practice of religion, and have been long free from habits of transgression, dangers of a new kind begin to surround them. Whatever is habitual has a tendency to become unconscious, and whatever is unconscious is liable to sudden or vehement surprises. The very freedom such people enjoy from ordinary temptations, the clearness of their daily path, makes them to feel like men dwelling in peace in a coun-

try once infested with enemies, but now long ago cleared of them. When we are at peace, we do not bar and fortify our dwellings, as if we were in a country swept by warfare. We throw down our walls and strongholds. We dwell securely each man under his vine and under his fig-tree. So it is in religion. After a course of repentance, and the hard struggle of conversion to God, we find ourselves at large. After the "winds and the sea" are fallen, "there is a great calm." It is a blessed state, full of quiet and refreshing; full of calm acquiescence in our lot, and of unexcited joy in the service of God, in self-denials and prayers, in frequenting the offices of the Church, and the holy sacraments. There grows every day a fuller persuasion that the point is turned; the great work over; our lot sealed; that God loves us, and has "brought us nigh unto" Himself; that we have passed from death unto life, and are His sons. And all this is most true: Blessed be God. But there are certain habits of mind which go with such a state; and to these habits certain peculiar temptations are incident.

I. First, people who are really religious sometimes trust in God's keeping, without considering the limits and conditions under which that keeping is promised to them. It is not promised absolutely, as if they should be safe anywhere, or

in any thing, go where they may, do what they will. Neither are they extravagant enough to think so. They know very clearly that they have no warrant to look for His keeping, if they should go out of the path of duty, or run themselves into temptation. All deliberate courting of the tempter they know does at once cancel God's promise of protection; and yet the very clearness of this truth somehow deceives them. Because it is so clear, they feel confident that they can never act in defiance of it; and therefore that this or that particular line which they are entering upon is not in defiance of it. It is very certain, however, that people someway advanced in a religious life do exceed these conditions, and find it afterwards to their sorrow, when some great fall has broken their security, and filled them with a sudden confusion. It is all then, in a moment, clear and plain, as if a veil had suddenly fallen, and their eyes were opened to behold their shame.

II. Again, the reason why they make these dangerous mistakes is, that, through habitual practice of the system of personal religion, which belongs to their lot in life, they sometimes become self-trusting; not expressly, perhaps, as if they did not know that God alone is their support, but virtually and by implication. For instance, we trust to our first impressions of what is right and wrong, safe or

dangerous, expedient or inexpedient. We believe our judgment to be as sound as our intentions; and that our religion is a second nature, of which the impulses and instincts have come to supersede forethought and deliberation; that they may be trusted without much scrutiny. We think ourselves out of the danger of such temptations as have long failed to overcome us: so that either they will not approach us, or that, if they do, we should certainly overcome them. A multitude of sins we feel that we are in no danger of being tempted to commit. They are so contrary to our whole life; to our formed habits; to our every thought; would do so great a violence to our inmost nature; our time is so much spent in reproving and trying to correct the same in others, that we should be almost inclined to laugh if any one should warn us against them.

Nevertheless, it does happen, and that not unfrequently, that really religious people fall into those very sins against which they believe themselves altogether proof. God in His mercy suffers them to find out their self-confidence, by a fall which breaks them asunder. They wake up, to find that they have been walking upon the brink of endless dangers; that Satan has beset all their path with snares; that all the while he has ceased to tempt them, he has been lulling them into security, brib-

ing them to take off their outposts and watches; and, at the same time, he has been laying traps and digging pitfalls on every side, so that they can scarce turn without falling into a snare. Perhaps nothing short of a heavy fall would open their eyes; nothing less would kindle the self-reproach and the shame which must abase their pride, and teach them their own utter helplessness, and the tenderness with which they ought to handle the sins of other men. There is an ingratitude in self-confidence; a forgetfulness of God, by whom alone we stand. It is like the self-complacency of Herod, when he made his oration unto the people;[1] or the self-exaltation of Nebuchadnezzar, when he "walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, . . . and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"[2] For these things God brings us down, leaving us to ourselves. He withdraws His hand; and we fall heavily, and become a by-word and a reproach. "They that sit in the gate speak against" us, "and the drunkards make songs upon" us.[3]

One great fall makes the scales to drop from men's eyes, and they see themselves surrounded by the danger of many worse; that this is perhaps

[1] Acts xii. 21. [2] Dan. iv. 29, 30. [3] Ps. lxix. 12.

the least, yet it is very stunning. They see how far they have ventured into dangerous ways; how they have chosen their own path; withdrawn from God's keeping; how relaxed is their whole character; how open to the inroads of sin; how many of their best points consist only in not being tempted. And God, in His love, suffers them to learn this at any cost, for fear of worse; and all that they have been in time past seems cancelled. All their profession, acts of religion, almsdeeds, fasts, prayers, humiliations, seem to be gone, as things they have now no right in. They have brought a shame on all, and shewn its hollowness; and after many years of professed religion, while others are looking on them as saints, they are within full of shame and desolation; words of respect are dreadful rebukes, especially if they were once deserved. They are now forced down to begin all over again; to come to God as the poor prodigal; to take the lowest place of all, that of "the servant who knew his Lord's will, and did it not."[1] Fearful discipline, full of a searching anguish of heart. Yet necessary, and, if necessary, blessed; for all things are better than to be a castaway. Any suffering in this world, rather than to perish in the world to come. Any shame now, rather than shame before Christ at His coming with the holy angels.

[1] St. Luke xii. 47.

I have endeavoured to suggest briefly what is the nature of those temptations by which religious people are peculiarly beset; and have very slightly noticed what seems to be the cause of their liability to be overcome by them. We will hereafter consider the mysterious design of God in permitting them to be abased with such falls. To sum up what has been said in the fewest words, I will add, that want of circumspection and of a watchful salutary fear of falling, is in itself a tempting of God. How much more, then, the venturous way in which some men enter upon paths which are either not pointed out to them by God's providence, or even forbidden! But at present we have chiefly to consider the dangers which beset religious minds. A few words will be enough to shew, what need there is even for the most advanced and practised in religion to watch without ceasing against the manifold dangers of our fallen state. Our whole life is a spiritual combat. While we live we must contend. This is not our rest.

(1.) For it must be remembered, that the greatest saint may be tempted to the worst of sins. I do not say the temptation will prevail; God forbid; but that temptations may be addressed to him; and if the most saintly minds may be tempted, how much more are we open to the incursions of temptation! It is true of our blessed Lord alone,

that the devil, after he was once fully foiled in his endeavour to seduce Him from God, began thenceforward for ever to oppose and to afflict Him. There was no hope of prevailing against Him, because the prince of this world had nothing in Him. There was no inward sin on which to work by allurements or stimulants. Not so with us: to the end of life we carry a fallen nature, with its taints and proneness to evil. This is mortified and kept under in those that live a holy life, but still in some sort remains within. To the end the prince of this world has something in us; and to this he addresses his flatteries and persuasions. How strange it seems to us to read of Abraham's falsehood, David's awful and complex sin, the denials of Peter, the contention of Paul and Barnabas! If such saints were tempted and overcome, how shall we escape temptations and downfalls? It is true that, as men grow in grace, temptation loses much of its power over them. St. John says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."[1] And again: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."[2] That is to say, that in every saint there is

[1] 1 St. John iii. 9. [2] 1 St. John v. 18.

the power of the Holy Ghost, which is more than sufficient to ward off temptations. The gift of regeneration, unfolded into a new spirit, is so at variance with the solicitations of evil, that it would do a great violence to itself if it should deliberately sin; the circumspection of the regenerate is such that the snares and assaults of Satan are powerless and vain. All this describes the spiritual strength and matured stedfastness of those that are holy. It is not an immunity from temptation, but a moral power residing in the will, by which the tempter is perfectly repelled. It does not say, that holy men are not tempted. It does not mean, that the holiest cannot fall. To the end, all stedfastness is subject to the laws of probation. But in us, who, alas, are neither strong nor holy, save in the measure common to ordinary Christians, there must ever be the danger of being, not only tempted, but overcome. Our past religion will not save us. Our stedfastness is not in what we have been, but in what we are: and we are, most of us, still weak and frail. What may befall a saint may easily prevail against us. So long as we are in the flesh, the eye and the ear are open, and the imagination is restless and full of visions. These may be mortified indeed, and then sin will address itself to them in vain. But address itself it will; and the habits of watchfulness and self-control may be relaxed, and

the character let down to a pitch where sin has a greater sway and a surer dominion.

Spiritual declension is a very awful reality, and the most devout may fall into it. Of this we have sufficient proofs and examples in holy Scripture; and any one who has examined his heart must also know how his state has varied at various times. In times of sorrow, or any great fear, we know what a peculiar tenderness of conscience; what a dread of trifling even with a thought of sin; what gentleness and kindly dispositions we have felt towards all, even unworthy persons, and to their very faults; what an awful, and yet blessed, perception we have had of God's nearness to us, and how open our hearts have been towards Him; what circumspection in all the least actions of our life. After the lapse of a few years, or sometimes of a few months, how has all this been changed; what a slumber and inertness of the inner life; what dulness of conscience; what fearlessness of sin; how little compunction at having inwardly assented to temptation! We seem not to be the same persons: as if we had lost our identity—had become altogether changed, and had passed into a worse nature. There is something fearful and depressing, in the highest degree, to find ourselves so fallen. The recollection of past times, when our heart was clear and peaceful, is both an humiliation and a

rebuke. And it is with a bitter sadness that we say, "Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle!"[1]

(2.) Another truth to be remembered is, that the worst sins come on insensibly. They seldom, if ever, present themselves to a holy mind in their full outline at once. They very seldom become really visible in their first approaches. They lie masked behind indifferent things, mingled in the duties and offices of our station, covered even with a religious aspect; then they shew themselves only in part, which, taken alone, may be harmless, but prepares the way for that in which the true evil lies. When the serpent tempted Eve, he did not at once put before her the act of disobedience, but first engaged her thoughts with the question, "Yea, hath God said?" There needs much preparing to break the startling effect of a temptation. If we could see at once the full reach and depth of the evil, we should be saved by our very fears. Dread would make us recoil. We should not so much as trust ourselves in the indifferent things which are the avenues to it. We would rather

[1] Job xxix. 2-4.

die than commit it. Besides, most of the dangers of religious people lie in the region of things that are lawful. They do not overstep the boundaries which separate things permitted from things forbidden; into the latter they seldom, if ever, willingly allow themselves to go. The tempter must overtake them within the range of their own permitted sphere, and therefore must use lawful things as the matter of his temptations. Lawful things out of season or out of measure, become to them the occasions of falling. Breaches of self-control, of self-chastisement, of vigilant watchfulness, of circumspect care over acts, words, and even thoughts; these are the beginning, and through these he prevails to entangle us in excesses, irregularities, immoderation. At the outset we see nothing, and there really is nothing, in which we may not allow ourselves. But in the season, measure, and use, there lies the whole character of the act, and the whole probation of our will.

(3.) And once more; it is the nature of such temptations to prevail before we become aware of them. It is only by retrospect that we really find ourselves to be fallen; as we cannot mark changes of our natural growth and countenance but by recollection. I do not mean, that all along there are no intimations that things are going wrong. Such, indeed, there are; but they are very subtil and

very gradual, so as to be almost imperceptible in their advance. They seem to be checked when really they are advancing, and to be kept at bay when they have already gained the mastery. And then, when we find ourselves taken in the snare, we see also the whole course of the temptation; and how many times we might have withdrawn ourselves; and how many admonitions we received; and how uncalled for was our original self-exposure to the danger: we then see how self-sought it was, how gratuitous, how wanton. And we bitterly reproach ourselves when it is too late, and see a thousand things which ought to have been our protection; a thousand warnings, any one of which would now seem to be enough to startle us into a posture of defence. These are among our saddest thoughts. We can but reproach our folly. We feel to have shut ourselves out from God; to have forfeited all claim to be heard. When we pray, it seems as if He had surrounded Himself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through. The sin we have been betrayed into stands before us in a fearful stature, and seems to overshadow us, hiding the face of God and the cross of Christ from our sight. That which men would have chosen martyrdom rather than commit, they sometimes find themselves to have committed at the suggestion of an ordinary temptation.

Now, I have intentionally avoided giving examples of any particular sins, because there is a danger of seeming to limit to certain classes of temptations that which is common to all. Examples make general statements more vivid and definite ; but they also narrow and circumscribe the reach and extent of them. What has been said will apply to any kind of sin, whether of the flesh or of the spirit, which can prevail against any one who in the main lives a life of obedience. What sins can so prevail, and the particular forms of them, it is not my intention now to consider ; but one caution may be given. Let us all, in whatsoever state we are, howsoever long we may have lived a religious life, nevertheless watch against every sin of every kind, great and small, of the flesh and of the spirit. There is none we may give over watching against; for we are in most danger of those against which, feeling ourselves secure, we watch the least.

Let us now consider, in a few words, what is the mysterious design of God in permitting even religious people to fall.

1. First, it is evidently to break their presumption, to destroy self-trusting, and to awaken a watchful and humble dependence on His grace and keeping. There is a tendency in us all, even in the midst of the acts of a holy life, to tower

too high, and to become unsteady in our exaltation. This must be abased, "lest, being lifted up with pride," we "fall into the condemnation of the devil."[1] This one temper will destroy the whole spiritual life. It makes all religion a mere formality. Prayers, confessions, fastings, humiliations—what are all these to a mind that is possessed with a self-trusting spirit? Even ascetic rules only brace this self-confidence more intensely, and raise it to a higher pitch. It is so easy to be severe to ourselves, when we are not tempted to be otherwise. Half of our severity has in it no real principle of self-discipline, as we soon find when we are tempted to relax. This is a secret we must needs learn, or we shall have but imperfect knowledge of ourselves; and through imperfect self-knowledge, imperfect repentance, imperfect humiliations. It is by such falls that God reveals to us what is in ourselves, and excites in us a horror of our own obstinate corruptions. They are the scourges of our sloth, the chastisements of our lukewarmness, and judgments upon our presumption in "tempting the Lord our God."

2. Another purpose of God in thus humbling even those who in many things are His servants is, to teach them to be forbearing and compassionate towards those that are fallen. A self-trusting

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 6.

spirit is almost always censorious, harsh, exacting. With an artificial standard of its own, it is inconsiderate and unsympathising to others. Such people are quick to see blots in others, and to censure them; ready to observe their falls, and to find out the aggravating features of their case. They have an honest zeal against sin; but they have little tenderness for sinners. Their admonitions have a sharp edge, and their reproofs sound like reproaches. Even truth in their mouth is uncharitable, and their warnings are without mercy. People often are not aware of all this. They speak as they feel. What they say seems deserved; and perhaps it is so; but, it may be, they are not the persons who ought to say it. It may be that the very same sins, or even worse, lie coiled within them. All the time they are virtually what those they reprove are in act. In others they are, by anticipation, condemning themselves. They go on recording hard censures, laying up unsparing verdicts, against the day when a sudden fall shall point them all against themselves. Now this sort of character is by no means uncommon; nor is it necessarily hypocritical, but simply self-deceiving. They have presumed upon God, and their own strength; and have learned to speak in a language above themselves. And God corrects this by leaving them to themselves, and suffering them to be

tempted in a season of weakness, when their natural strength, on which they rest, is all they have. They fall; and learn what St. Paul meant when he said, "Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."[1] The consciousness of having fallen in the like way, makes a man afraid to act the reprover. He feels his words recoil upon himself; and he speaks as he himself can bear it, making his own heart the measure of his words, and his own case the interpreter and pleader for the falls of others. All his past censures come back upon him with a fearful severity; and he feels as if he could never rebuke any one again. It seems as if the worst he ever had to reprove were better than himself. It seems to him as if he could never any more use rebukes, but only beseech them, with tender compassion, and even with tears, to join him in humbling themselves before One who alone is without sin. It is true, indeed, that the perfect holiness of saints has in it a tender compassion and a loving pity, like to the Spirit of Christ Himself. They have received of Him the gift of tenderness to sinners, without the fearful discipline of personal falls; and theirs is the highest and most healing sympathy. But for us, weak Christians, the school

[1] Gal. vi. 1.

of pity is the melancholy experience of our own humiliations. And well is it to learn compassion any how; for the harsh and impatient are not near to the kingdom of heaven. Let us not venture to reprove any without a vivid recollection of our own past falls; nor in any way speak of the sins of others without a deep sense of our own.

3. And, lastly, it is to teach us our need of fixed and particular rules for the government of our lives; and that not in great matters only, but in the least; because it is in little things that the first approaches of sin are made to religious minds. We must not trust in general rules, in good intentions, in the expectation of being able to meet particular temptations by defences adopted on the spot. We need much forethought, foresight, and determination. Our system of discretionary rules must spread over all our life; over our duties, our devotions, our intercourse with others, whether of the Church or of the world; it must prescribe to us counsels of wisdom for our whole bearing, our words, our personal habits. Wherefore, St. Paul says, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."[1] No part of our daily life is too slight to admit of a holy intention, as none is too small to become the seat of great temptations. Another reason for this carefulness

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31.

in prescribing even the detail of our daily life is, that unless our rules are fixed, they cannot become habitual and confirmed. The very strength and life of all self-discipline is order, certainty, and decision. Our true safeguard against temptation is, to be the same at all times, in all companies, in all places; not to vary, and adapt ourselves to the humour of others, thereby adopting their temptations with their habits; but to be always and every where ourselves, and to oppose to the temptations of the world the consistency of a matured and practised habit of self-control. Indeed, in this most men err grievously. They are strict at home, and lax abroad; that is, they are rigid when they are not tempted, and loose when they are in the midst of temptations; watchful where the danger is little, and off their guard where it is great: whereas they ought, on the contrary, to be all the more severe, rigorous, watchful, and guarded, because they are out of their sheltered retirement, and beset by the illusions and solicitations of the world. Yet we seldom see men who are devout and careful at home even equally so in society. And to what bitter reproaches, to what hours of miserable retrospect, to what fearful havoc in the spiritual life, does this relaxation lead! How do men that go forth with many saintly tokens upon them, come home in remorse, to put ashes upon their heads!

Alas, the world's kisses are death to the hidden life. The world is perilous in its array; full of seducing spirits, crafty, fair-seeming, versatile, and deadly. We may well fear it. Well is it if we fear it greatly; for few there be that fear it at all. Happy are they who walk unspotted of the world, in ways of lowliness and self-mistrust; and happy they whose pride is abased, and whose presuming hearts are brought down by a salutary humiliation. Piercing as the discipline may be, better is it to have a spiritual sorrow, "sharper than any two-edged sword," than to walk proud and blindfold, "deceiving and being deceived," tempting the Lord our God.

SERMON VIII.

WORLDLY AMBITION.

St. Matt. iv. 8-10.

"Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

This temptation seems to be an offer of worldly power on an unlawful condition. The tempter addressed himself to that inclination of our nature which, when perverted in us, is ambition and vainglory. We are wont to call ambition an infirmity which lingers last and longest of all, even in minds that are noble and pure. It has in it, as we think, nothing low, mean, or little. It is closely allied with the consciousness of great powers, right intentions, high purposes of unselfish devotion for the welfare of others; it is upon a

large scale, and takes a wide sweep and range in its aims and endeavours; it thereby lifts itself out of the common level of mankind, and rises above all lesser inducements, and the motives which sway other men; its whole tone and bearing has a breadth, dignity, and grandeur nearly allied to moral greatness. Perhaps it was in the belief that our blessed Lord was at least susceptible of some such pure and exalted allurement, that Satan presented to Him "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them."

He "taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain." We shall do best to understand this as we read it. The truest interpretations are those that are nearest to the letter. We do not know by what laws of motion or of place this mysterious passage was controlled. All the conditions of the spiritual world are inscrutable to us. As in the book of the prophet Ezekiel we read of his rapture to Tel-abib: "The spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the

hand of the Lord was strong upon me. Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days"[1]—and again, of his rapture to Jerusalem: "And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north."[2] Moreover, we read of the rapture of St. Philip to Azotus, and of St. Paul into the third heaven;[3] of the mysterious

[1] Ezek. iii. 12-15. [2] Ezek. viii. 1-5.

[3] Acts viii. 39, 40; 2 Cor. xii. 2.

visitations of our Lord after His resurrection, and of His ascension to the right hand of God. It is, therefore, more natural to believe, that as our Lord was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted," so Satan was permitted to take Him to the pinnacle of the temple and to the mountain-height, to consummate the mystery of His temptation. And we shall do best simply to believe, that from some vast summit, looking down upon a boundless reach of earth, the tempter did shew the kingdoms, and pomp, and riches, and splendour, and glory of the world. It was a vision of worldly power and greatness, full of allurements and promises; of unbounded means of doing good to mankind; of wielding such dominion as perhaps man never wielded before. Whether Satan had any power to fulfil this promise; whether any indirect means, through the agency of evil, of bestowing the kingdoms of this world; whether any control was permitted to him over the collective actings, as over the individual acts, of men, so as to give him a sway in the disposal of earthly crowns—we know not. It may be that the promise was mere guile—fair and false: but this matters little. The temptation was simply this, that our blessed Lord should obtain the powers and gifts of the world by transferring His obedience from God to Satan. And this brings the nature of the temptation

within the sphere of our ordinary trials. It is, in fact, the peculiar temptation of those who love and seek after greatness, power, dominion, that is, of the ambitious; and as such we will go on to consider it.

Now of those that seek after worldly power, some seek it in unlawful, some in lawful ways; some with motives wholly selfish; some with a persuasion that they desire it for the good of others and for the glory of God. And perhaps these latter, whatever they might admit in regard to the former kind of men, would very much resent being told that they are in danger of falling down and worshipping the tempter. Perhaps this would be generally thought to be a harsh judgment, and untrue. And yet there will be found in it more truth than they are aware of; it is therefore well worthy of our consideration: for there is "an exceeding high mountain" in the heart of every man, from which he is ever looking out upon manifold temptations.

1. First of all, it is obvious that to seek for worldly power and greatness by the use of unlawful means is a direct revolt from God. It is a deliberate disobedience to His will; a withdrawal of allegiance, trust, fear, hope, reverence, and worship from Him. It may not, indeed, be followed by any perceptible addresses to the prince of this world, or by acknowledged commerce with him. Men may not, by any deliberate compact, "make a

covenant with death," nor "be at agreement with hell;" nor, like Saul, when he had forsaken the Lord, go disguised, and inquire by night of those that have a familiar spirit: nevertheless they do, in the most real and effectual way, fall down and worship the powers of darkness. For what do men really acknowledge, in the fact of using unlawful means, such as force, wrong, falsehood, deception, equivocation, to accomplish their aims, but that these things have power and efficacy to aid and foster their designs? and what are these but powers of darkness, in which they trust, and venture their hopes of success? Take the case of Jeroboam. It was God's will to give him the kingdom of Israel; but in His own time and way. Jeroboam took it by rebellion, and retained it by idolatry. He used the policy of the devil to accomplish a promise of God. He fell down and worshipped him, that he might have the kingdom at once. And he bequeathed this wicked policy, and the plausible necessity of maintaining it, to the kings of Israel for ever; so that he stands recorded as "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." No doubt, after him, great reasons of state were found to keep open the schism from the temple, and to maintain the calves at Dan and Bethel; wise men, and astute counsellors, were not wanting to lament the necessity,

and to perpetuate the sin, till a whole people fell down and worshipped the powers of evil, from generation to generation. Wars of acquisition, crafty diplomacy, the most dazzling splendour of earthly rule, many of the mightiest exploits in the history of nations,—what will all these appear in the day of judgment, but a worship of the world? And what will the princes of this world, their "governors, and captains, and judges, and treasurers, and counsellors, and all the rulers of the provinces,"[1] be seen to be in that day—except the few that have been saints in secret—but worshippers of power, and darkness, and vainglory?

But this is as true of private men as of public and notorious offenders. How few men, with the baits of power, elevation, applause, before them, can resist the allurement of indirect means, such as compromises, abandonment of pledges or obligations, and the like! It is a melancholy and most instructive fact, that there is hardly one of the world's great men in whose private history there is not to be found some stifling of conscience, some departure from rectitude, stern fidelity, and determined abiding by truth and right, in the teeth of danger, or at the cost of failure in their ruling passion. In the earnestness with which they seek their aim, they grow precipitate, unscrupulous,

[1] Dan. iii. 3.

reckless, obdurate; and that in proportion as the end nears, and the strife thickens, and success or failure are in the crisis. One last step, the last act which secures the desires of a life, is often one that henceforward makes life not worth the living. They have succeeded; the point is won. But at what a cost! At the price of their heart's faith in the power of truth and right. They have in some way struck a bargain, or chaffered with a lie, and put their trust for success in a falsehood, which, if it be any thing, is an unclean spirit. They have withdrawn their faith from the supremacy of righteousness, they have forsaken the service of truth and goodness, because these appeared to be despised, disarmed, and exiled, because the world seemed too strong for them, and because the dictates of faith and truth pointed to paths that seemed to lead away from the desired end. And yet, if wrong and falsehood can at all bring success, by whose strength do they prevail? Who is he that works by them in the world, but the same that said, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me?" Unlawful means are the laws and policy of the kingdom of darkness; they are its statute and its common law, its usages and prerogatives; and any man who invokes them makes himself a subject of that kingdom, and a liege and worshipper of its prince.

2. And, once more. It may be objected, all this is plain in the case of those that use unlawful means; but surely it cannot be said of those who use no means but such as are lawful in the pursuit of advancement; or, in other words, it is possible to be ambitious, and yet never to seek the aims of ambition by means that are forbidden. It may be said, also, that a man ought to desire to rise in his profession, to extend his usefulness, to gain influence, to become an authority, and the like.

Now, to this there are many answers.

First of all, it will generally be found, that men who set themselves to rise in their profession, as it is called, do so by unintermitting exertion of their own natural powers. The world calls it honourable exertion, a laudable enthusiasm, without which a man will never succeed. It is much to be feared that this is often a mere stretch of the natural faculties, an unsanctified exertion of intellect or perseverance, and an entire reliance on their own powers, with a virtual but real withdrawal of faith from the providence of God. And what are our natural powers, apart from the illumination and guidance of God, but powers of this life, of this fallen, deceived, and deceiving world? What is self-reliance, but a disguise of the tempter, masking himself from our sight in the workings of our own minds? The whole life of

an ambitious man, trusting to his own powers, even though he never transgress the strict laws of truth and uprightness, what is it but weariness, rivalry, anxiety, self-guidance? Now this is as full a withdrawal of submission and docile reliance from God, as can be imagined. If he does not fall down and worship the tempter, he does not worship God by seeking all things as His gift. And what is this withdrawal of worship from God but a direct worship of self, or a constructive worship of this world, of its powers, chances, and events?

Another thing that may be said is, that this withdrawal of the heart from God is all the more explicit when the subject-matter of a man's life is of a kind in which the providence of God is specially manifested; such, for instance, as all offices in His Church, and all things which lead or relate to them. It is not only by simoniacal contracts that men may obtain holy functions by barter with the enemy of the Church. The use and laying out of natural gifts and powers, such as intellect, learning, dexterity, eloquence, and, much worse, of the gifts of His Spirit, so as to attract the notice of those in whose hands is the disposal of dignities and preferments; the willing acceptance of prominent places; the doing of acts in a direct line of suggestion or invitation of ulterior

ends; the outrunning of the providence of God; the overpassing of limits which He has drawn along our path, into spheres where we no longer have His sanction, which in themselves are lawful, but are not for us: in these and many other ways men do distinctly transfer the intention of their heart and its affections from God, as the guide and disposer of their life, to an unknown power, which is partly self, partly the world, and covertly he who, through the world and ourselves, leads us captive at his will.

3. And again. Men may most fully entangle themselves in this sin of transferring their worship from God to the prince of this world, without ever using any means, lawful or unlawful, to attain their desires. There is such a thing as a suppressed covetousness or ambition, an importunate and unscrupulous craving after things so far beyond a man's reach, that he never attempts to attain them. What is more common than for men to indulge in visions of what they desire to be and to possess; to harbour, and to fill up with most elaborate details, imaginations of great estates, offices, trusts, and stations, and what they would do, and say, and look like, if they were in them? They fancy to themselves all manner of scenes, actions, successes; and people a whole world with dependants, followers, admirers; and tell themselves

most pleasant tales of wonderful undertakings and achievements, kingdoms exalted, factions abolished, nations governed, Churches purified, schisms healed, heresies overthrown, mankind illuminated; in all of which *they* are the chief leaders, counsellors, and actors. Out of all these splendid and gaudy visions, self emerges at last as the beginning and the end of all. They live in a dream of self-love; they have waking visions all day long of their own importance; and they soothe themselves with the persuasion, that the greatest men in the world are often least known and acknowledged.

In all this the spiritual sin is complete. It is a mixture of self-love, self-elevation, forgetfulness of God, who has revealed His will in appointing our actual lot, and of craving for what He has not ordained for us, with a secret willingness to attain our desired vision if we could. The means, indeed, may never come within our reach; but we are as willing to possess the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, as if they were tendered to our hand. It is to be feared, that if the means were presented, we should be tempted to be unscrupulous in using them. Perhaps we should not venture on direct and visible transgressions of the divine laws; though it is hard to say to what we may not be led by a habit of self-intoxication and secret vainglory. It is certain that

we are thereby disposed, by preparation of heart, for any thing rather than fail in our cherished desires. It is very awful to think of the unknown sins which are virtually contained in strong desires after the things of this world. When they master a man, they make him impatient of all obstructions, reckless of moral prohibitions, of the admonitions of Providence, and the warnings which God conveys when He visibly withholds from us the means of attaining what we desire. To go on craving after an end which He keeps back, is morally equivalent to seeking it by unlawful means. In either case it is a contravention of the Divine will. No one can as yet conceive, how deeply the hearts of some men who never emerge from private life are tainted by this sin; those, too, who are least suspected, whose outward life gives no opportunities of expressing in any definite form the particular kind or direction of their ambitious hankering. Perhaps they never exhibit more than discontent, bitterness, and a censorious temper. The secret is untold, and dies with them; it is seen only by the holy angels, and shall never be known until the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.

This is true not of those alone who are baffled in their ambition or disappointed in their expectations, but also of the most successful. Power reveals what is in man. The sins of self-confi-

dence and self-contemplation reach their height in the man who has gained his end without seeking and receiving it as a gift from God. Success is a confirmation, in retrospect, of all his self-choosing, self-guidance, self-advancement. He is, as men vauntingly say, the maker of his own fortunes; and strange enough it is, that even Christians use such a phrase in commendation. Men who have risen in the world as statesmen, jurists, warriors, orators, merchants, philosophers, and the like, are often practical atheists. They have so long taken cognisance of no powers and agencies but such as they can measure, calculate, and control, that they cease to be conscious of any other. They act as if higher powers did not exist —that is, as if they did not believe them. They could not ignore them more completely if they did not believe them; and what in effect is this but to be "without God in the world?" And this habit of acting without dependence on God forms first an unconsciousness, and then an insensibility, of His presence and power. What do we mean when we say that a man is intoxicated with the world, or eaten up by self-sufficiency, but that the world is his idol, or that his trust is in himself? And what is this but self-worship—the finest of Satan's wiles? Something a man must supremely love, trust, reverence, and obey. If it be not God, it

can only be one other. Under whatsoever guise or array — whether it be the powers of the world, or the laws of nature, or the agencies of men, or the gifts of intellect, or moral force, or those faculties which seem most our own, that is, our very self, — it is no other than he who, on the top of the mountain, said, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Self is but the subtilest array and the nearest approach of his presence. When we worship ourselves we worship him.

And this leads to one or two plain reflections.

One is, that the highest apparent success in this world is often the most real and utter failure. By accepting of its offers, many men have in reality lost all. There is something very fearful in the uniform success which seems sometimes to attend on wicked men. All winds and tides, and outward influences, and conjunctures of unlooked for events, seem to befriend and to wait upon their will. They are carried up to the head of their callings, and to the lead of their professions; to the summit of kingdoms, and to the pinnacle of Churches; and wealth pours itself at their feet, and men seem fascinated by their tongues, and give way to their plans and schemes, and offer themselves for tools to carry them into effect. All this seems the favour of

Providence, and the countersign of the Most High, owning and declaring their acts as the will of Heaven. God's servants are often perplexed at these things, and are in doubt whether, after all, they have not "cleansed their heart in vain, and washed their hands in innocency." It seems, for a time, either that right and wrong are artificial and conventional usages, or that the laws of God's providence are out of course. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I the end of these men; namely, how Thou dost set them in slippery places, and castest them down, and destroyest them."[1] It is the Divine indignation which bids them prosper. The world loves its own, and heaps its gifts and honours on those that are like-minded with itself. They that have most cunning to advance its interests, touch its sympathies, flatter its weaknesses, soothe its disappointments, and sustain its self-esteem, are its surest favourites. And, under the supreme control of the Divine Providence, which orders the universal scheme of the world and disposes all its issues, there is a vast body of inferior powers left in the hands of men, whereby to reward and enrich the servants of the world. So that there are always at work two administrations, a lower and a higher, a human and a divine: the human busying itself in

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 16, 17.

details that are visible, proximate, and imperfect; the divine ordering those laws that are final, perfect, and supreme. Men make beginnings, but God ordains the endings; so that the same man, at one and the same time, may both succeed and fail. He may win all in the lower world of human action, and lose all in the higher order of divine rewards. He may be both most exalted and most abased, most prosperous and most baffled, most mighty and most powerless, most cherished by men and most cast off by God. Set him on the throne of the world, with all creatures at his foot, and his name blotted from the book of life. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Therefore, when success wafts men onward, they have reason to fear and to look with a twofold scrutiny into their aims, employments, and alliances. There is something suspicious in the favour of many men, in general popularity, worldly reputation, and the concurrent applause of those who are morally divided. It savours of the woe "when all men shall speak well of" us, and of the kiss that was given in Gethsemane. How many men who have begun well, in great fervour and fidelity to God, have had their active powers warped, and the warmer affections of their hearts

stolen away, by the greetings, gifts, and flatteries of life! High place, great friendships, open avenues to elevation, daily approaching success, have been the ruin and utter loss of thousands. From a simple and saint-like temper, they have become subtil, designing, and secular. Their worldly powers and their personal endowments have been every day developed and multiplied so as to win a double measure of admiration and a perpetually increasing name; while in the eye of God they have withered and fallen away from the very root. Prosperous men are seldom devout; religious men generally suffer by success; high characters sink as their worldly reputation rises; and moral principle deteriorates as men obtain advancement in the world. They gain their point, but in gaining it lose all that makes it to be desired. They win places of power, but by means which make them powerless when the place is won. Under their seeming success there is the deepest failure. They forfeit the kingdom of God for the baits of this false and fleeting life; or, for a few years of honour in a fallen world, they lose a high place in the orders of heaven, and are even "saved so as by fire."

Another remark we may make is the reverse of the last; I mean, that seeming failure is often the truest success. It was He that spurned the tempter when he offered Him all the kingdoms of the world

who afterwards said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." They that forsook houses, brethren, sisters, father, mother, wife, children, and lands, for His name's sake, received all these an hundredfold, and the heritage of eternal life. Though they had nothing, yet they possessed all things.[1]

So it has ever been with the Church. When she forsook all, then she was most richly endowed in heaven; when most overcome, she overcame all. Such has been the secret history of saints. Their great powers in the world were the reward of their perfect deadness to it. Because they refused its offers, therefore they became its rulers. Because they had no desire, nor love, nor appetite for it, therefore they were set to dispose of it. Because they shunned its titles and exaltations, therefore they were honoured and lifted up to the thrones of power. They were true followers of Him who, when He perceived that the people "would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, departed again into a mountain Himself alone."[2] They ran counter to it, and yet won its willing obedience; they were unpopular and unpalateable to the men of the world, and yet they were followed and obeyed by them; they deprived themselves of its powers and gifts, and did things the

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 10. [2] St. John vi. 15.

most inexpedient in the calculations of worldly schemers, and yet all things seemed spellbound to work with them and for them. Nothing is more certain than that they who have done most for the kingdom of God on earth have not been the most popular in their day; and they who have been the most popular, even among good men, in the kingdoms of the world, have left the fewest and faintest traces of truth upon mankind. God seems to work by contraries, and to harden the heart of the world against His servants, to "make His power to be known." For some have been truly outcast, misrepresented, spoiled, and set aside, so that people have thought them fairly defeated and extinct; and yet the working of their words and deeds, of their silent example, and imperceptible influence on other minds, has spread itself unawares throughout whole nations and Churches. They have courted no one; were solicitous for no favour, or gift, or privilege; they have even crossed the wise and powerful, and resisted the hands which hold the powers of the world. Many of the greatest benefactors of mankind have died without leaving so much as to pay their burial, and yet the hearts of men have obeyed them to the third and the fourth generation.

And what is the secret of all this, but that they worshipped the Lord their God, and Him only did

they serve? They indulged themselves in no remote visions, in no restless imaginations, in no exciting self-contemplation. The whole horizon of their hearts was clear. Nothing lay beneath it disturbing the truth of their intentions. There was no end in life they desired but to do the will of God. They had no cravings for things out of their sphere, no forecasting and expectation of any thing to come. What God had made them, that they simply desired to be — to realise deeply their present lot, to live wholly in it and for it alone, to confide in it as the pledge of God's presence. No nice calculations of probable gain, or usefulness, or power to be gotten otherwise or elsewhere, had any sway over them. They would not hesitate a moment to do acts of the highest indiscretion, as the world judges, and to throw away all promises and offers of interest and advantage, rather than seem to yield even a constructive worship to the powers of the world. They were of more price than the world: with all its gifts and all its gold, it could not buy them. These are they "of whom the world was not worthy." It was cheap, slight, and paltry in their eyes; for by faith they had already "seen the King in His beauty, and beheld the land which is very far off."[1] They had seen the throne and Him that sat upon it, who is "as a jasper and a

[1] Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

sardine stone" to look upon; and all earthly things waxed pale and dim. They had tasted "the powers of the world to come," which are perfect and eternal; and the purest and best things of this life drew from them not desires, but tears. None so intensely perceived the good and beautiful which yet lingers in the earth; yet they shrank from the savour of death which, by sin, is shed abroad upon the creation of God. They took refuge in the unseen kingdom, which is all pure, deathless, everlasting; serving and waiting for Him who "hath made us kings and priests unto God."

What is this visible world but the disordered array under which the one only true kingdom abides the day of "the restitution of all things?" The world, with its pageantry, is but shadow and simulation, imitating the order of heavenly things. What else are its fountains of honours, its patents of nobility, and the solemnity with which it issues out its badges and titles of distinction, and arranges its servants in ranks of high and low degree, according to their fidelity to its service and their devotion to its will? But there is coming a day when "the face of the covering" shall be destroyed, "and the veil that is spread over all people,"[1] and "the kingdom which cannot be shaken" shall stand forth, and then shall many be first that now are

[1] Isaiah xx. 7.

last, and last first. Then will be a strange and awful cancelling of degrees, and an unexpected marshalling of God's elect in a new and wonderful order. Then it shall be seen for whom the right hand and the left, which the sons of Zebedee blindly though nobly desired, are indeed prepared.

Let us beware, then, of the baits and allurements which are peculiarly rife in these latter days. Let us suspect calculations of expediency, dexterous plans, great undertakings at little cost, popular systems of religion, tempting offers of worldly favour and support—that is, the whole course and movement of the world. God's kingdom is to be spread and served in God's own way. There is no other than that hard, strait, unpopular way which prophets, martyrs, and saints have trod. Let us keep close to this. Let no visions draw us out of it. They can only beguile us of our reward; promise us kingdoms, and rob us of our crown; offer us purple raiment, and make the shame of our nakedness to appear "before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels,"[1] at His coming.

[1] 1 Tim. v. 21.

SERMON IX.

THE RIGHT USE OF REST AFTER TRIAL.

St. Matthew iv. 11.

"Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

After the temptation of our Lord was ended, St. Luke says, the devil "departed from Him for a season,"[1] implying that in some form or other Satan was still hovering about His path. And the forty days of fasting being now over, He was an hungered, faint, wearied in flesh and spirit, with the long and sore conflict He had endured. In this season of peace, angels came and ministered strength and refreshment to Him. What heavenly communications they made to His exhausted soul, it is not for us to imagine. In the wilderness of Sinai "man did eat angels' food." In this desert, the Son of Man, "the true bread which came

[1] St. Luke iv. 13.

down from heaven," was strengthened with the bread of God.

Now from this we may learn a lesson applicable to our own case, namely, that after temptations resisted, there come seasons of peculiar rest: "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."[1] The mere cessation of active trial is in itself an unspeakable relief. So long as the tumult is kept up within, we are worn, anxious, and depressed. The vividness of evil thoughts and affections, the mistrust and repining of our hearts, the useless and incessant chafing of our desires against our conscience, the beating of strong wishes against a clear consciousness of impossibility or of a divine prohibition—all these make a torment within, to which hardly any other sorrow can be compared. At such times all other affections of the soul are confounded. We seem pent up into one thought, which besets our whole mind. Such a season of temptation is a time of havoc and disorder, even in those who come off with the mastery at last. Now the mere passing away of this is a refreshment, like the waking up out of a troubled dream, and finding it to be without reality. When the tempter is departed, the trial is passed, and we are full of peace. We have a keener perception of God's love shed abroad in us, a consciousness of

[1] Acts iii. 19.

having overcome in the strength of Christ. It seems as if "angels came and ministered unto" us out of the depth of heavenly consolation.

Now such is God's gracious way of dealing with us. After our trial comes rest; after our sorrow comes refreshment. But there are peculiar dangers attending this blessed change; and we have hardly less need to watch when our temptation is ended, than while it is yet upon us. And this we will go on to consider.

1. First, we are in danger of losing the impressions and state of heart which the suffering of temptation forms within us. While the trial is upon us, we are wakened up to a trembling and lively sense of our own weakness, and of the subtilty and strength of our unseen antagonist. The thought of being closely and personally assaulted by an evil angel is awful. We feel darkened by the thought of spiritual wickedness hanging over us. We do not know in what the trial may issue at last; how fearfully we may be entangled, or put to open shame. We summon up before our minds all manner of dark contingencies and afflicting visions of falls and abasement; and how we shall stand in the sight of the world with a brand which nothing can conceal. This sense of self-mistrust and fear at the presence and power of Satan, miserable and oppressive as it is, neverthe-

less is very salutary. It produces great quickness and tenderness of conscience, sensitiveness, and vigilance over the purity of our hearts, a quick perception of our own hidden sinfulness, of the great discord between our fair outward seeming and our real inward state; and all this makes us, for the time, peculiarly forbearing to others, gentle, enduring, afraid of impatience, or of a motion of resentful temper. We cannot bear our wonted high words, lofty looks, fierce tones, uncharitable thoughts. Above all, there is no time in which our prayers are more frequent and earnest, our self-examination deeper, our desires more importunate and sincere. The posture of our mind is less worldly, slothful, secure. Our whole inward life is braced up by a kind of tension of all its gifts and powers: if I may say so, it is more saintly than at other times. Such, I say, are the effects of a present temptation against which we are sincerely contending. The danger is, lest this be not the character of the mind itself, but a mere antagonism; lest it be only an attitude, an accidental posture related to the presence of our spiritual adversary, and therefore existing only so long as he is about us. Of course, even in the strongest and most self-possessed Christians, the presence of temptation will add intensity, consciousness, and effort, to their habitual state. This must be so,

and is not blameworthy. But it is dangerous when it is chiefly so; when the greater part is the accidental, and the habitual the less. For then, as soon as the danger seems past, a still more dangerous security comes on. Our feelings grow less active; we think we have exaggerated our peril, that we have made excessive efforts and needless resolutions; our watchfulness over ourselves relaxes; the thoughts of our hearts are less taxed, our tempers less guarded, our prayers fainter or fewer; our whole state let down some degrees of intensity, and our whole posture of mind inclines to relaxation. So hard is it to use God's gifts rightly and thankfully. When the tempter is departed, we forget him; when angels minister to us, we turn our consolations into dangers, and our rest into a declension.

2. The next danger of this time of peace is that our old state, in which the temptation found us at first, returns; and yet it is seldom altogether so well with us as before. Temptations are sent or permitted for many reasons: to try us, to humble us, to purify us, to waken us up out of lukewarmness, to kindle us with greater fervour of devotion, to form in us a higher tone of character, and to perpetuate it. When the temptation is gone, its effects ought still to survive. The fruits of the discipline are designed to be an abiding grace in our

souls. Whatsoever be the peculiar temptation, it was no doubt designed to elicit and establish in us the antagonist grace. If we have been tempted to pride, it was to leave us rooted in humility; if to worldliness, it was to perfect in us a deadness to the gifts of life; if it was excess of any kind, it was to chasten us into definite rules, strong resolutions, habitual self-denial; and so on. If, with the temptation, these also pass away, we shall but have suffered in vain, or rather for the worse. For, first, our old character will rise again to the surface; our old pride, self-consciousness, self-esteem, uncharitableness, luxury, softness, will come out again, encouraged by the return of calm, the absence of fear, and even stimulated by repression. They have been rather irritated than subdued; and a strange self-complacency spreads itself in our minds after a season of self-discipline, on the strength of which we take a larger measure of freedom. For instance, we think ourselves secure from censoriousness if, while we say sharp things of others, we have a consciousness of the sin of being censorious still present in our minds; or we think that the rest we enjoy is an indication from God that we may indulge it, forgetting that all peace must be of God's giving, not of our taking. Or again, after self-denial, such as fasting, we consciously allow ourselves a freer diet, as if it were neu-

tralised by past abstinence. Such are the strange compositions we make with our consciences; and the effect is to destroy the simplicity of our acts and the purity of our intentions, to make us refined and casuistical in plain duties, and so to prepare us to be deluded by the return of temptation.

3. And once more: another danger is, that active temptations return as it were from the opposite side. Sometimes, indeed, the very same comes back upon an unwary mind, almost as soon as it seems to be gone, with a force sudden and sevenfold, and fairly carries all before it. We may have held out for a week under provocation, until the trial seemed over, and then some unlooked-for event has kindled the anger of seven days in one, and "the last state is worse than the first." So it is in other temptations. But generally it seems that the manifold versatility of Satan changes the avenues of approach and the form of his attack. It is but a feint to call all our watchfulness to one point, and then to assault us in another. People who have overcome temptation to worldliness often become pharisaical—luxurious people miserly; they who have been humbling themselves with fasting become complacent at the half-admitted suggestion of their humility; or again, pure minds may become proud, severe spirits harsh and unsympathising. Such are our infirmities; so

are we surrounded by temptation, that we often do but make exchanges of the sins of boyhood for the sins of youth, the sins of youth for the sins of old age, the sins of the flesh for the sins of the spirit, and of spiritual sins one for another; the more visible for the less perceived, the lower for the more sublime. Such is our wonderful and fearful nature, it revolves in a circle with an instability and a speed so great, that we rise and fall by an inward motion of the heart: at our highest we are nearest to a change, and our changes are often diametrical and extreme. Verily it is an awful saying, "There are first which shall be last, and last which shall be first." "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Such as the speed of his fall, such oftentimes is ours; and as his was from heaven to earth, so is ours from the highest aspiration to the lowest abasement.

Now it will seem, perhaps, paradoxical to say that times of temptation are times of safety. Yet there is a truth in it. And it is true thus far:— Temptations that are resisted become a wholesome and searching discipline. Unresisted temptations, or temptations only faintly opposed, of course tend simply to perdition. These are excluded from our present subject by the very terms of it. We are speaking of Him who bruised Satan under His feet, and of those who, like Him and in Him, "re-

sist the devil." I have already said what is the temper and posture of mind which temptations produce in us; and also that it is doubtless the design of God, in suffering us to be so tried, that the spiritual state elicited in the season of temptation should become habitual, and abide as a gift of grace in us for ever. It may be, that to beings once fallen, the pain and toil of this warfare is the only way to perfect strength and purity. For our sanctification is the expulsion of evil from the will, under the help of God's Spirit, by its own energies and acts. Every temptation overcome is such an act of expulsion, and therefore tends to our perfect cleansing.

Of this we are very certain, that at no time is the protection of angels and the help of God more near to us than when "the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."[1] At no time is the providence of God more directly pointed upon us than when snares are being spread around our feet: nor does the intercession of our blessed Lord, who, through temptation, knows "how to succour them that are tempted," ever prevail more mightily by His infinite merits than when the "hour and the power of darkness" is upon our souls. Peter was our type: and all that are tempted were in him, when our gracious Master

[1] Isaiah xxv. 4.

said, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."[1]

Strange, indeed, through our perversity, that dangers should come with the cessation of danger; that rest, peace, refreshing, quietness, should become perils. Yet so, in truth, they too often are. We are most liable to temptation at times when we think ourselves least likely to be overcome; for instance, when things have been going on smoothly; when we have been long unmolested by assaults; when we have overcome some solicitations to things unlawful or inexpedient; when we have done acts, or made resolutions, of higher devotion; when we have been reading and adopting in intention the example of saints; when we have been using high and great words of sanctity and of the cross; when we have done acts of charity, mercy, faith, and have the gladness of them still upon our hearts; when we have been highly accepted and owned of God in our prayers, or at the holy Eucharist, as Christ at His baptism, just before He was tempted: all these are times when we have need to watch with tenfold care, lest, through our slackness of security, peace should be more dangerous to us than temptation.

[1] St. Luke xxii. 31, 32.

Let us, then, consider how we ought to use this peace which follows upon a season of trial.

First, we ought to use it for a particular retrospect of the circumstances of our temptation. So long as the trial lasts, we are less able to take a true view of our case. We ought closely to ascertain what were the avenues by which the temptation came upon us; what occasions, or salient points, or positions of vantage, we gave to the tempter; what were our thoughts and dispositions of mind before it made its approach; what were our intentions; what were its symptoms and effects. And in all this we shall generally find the spiritual discernment and guidance of another more penetrating than our own. And the act of laying it open will bring with it that which will tend to check our relapse into a like condition.

Next, it will be necessary for us to make such resolutions of self-discipline, as shall cut off the occasion of which temptation took advantage before. Sometimes this may not be wholly possible; but in a great number of cases it will be. The perpetuating of any one resolution made at such a time will be a continual memorial of warning and admonition.

Again: the acts of prayer and humiliation used by us in a season of temptation may either wholly or in part be continued, and joined to our

daily devotions. Again: the day on which we were tempted may be noted in every year, or in every week: and the subject-matter of our trial be made a topic of self-examination, confession, self-denial.

And, once more; if others were involved with ourselves, either directly or indirectly, as in cases of unkindness or selfishness; or if others have been doubtfully affected by our example, as in cases of a more public temptation,—we ought to endeavour, by acts of humility and charity towards them, and by praying for them that they may be kept from all evil, to undo the ill effect we may have caused.

And, also, we ought thenceforward to set ourselves to the especial mortification of that particular sin which our temptation has revealed to us. Religious people often hinder their own advancement by a vague, indefinite manner of conducting their personal religion. They aim at too much at once; and so do nothing deeply. Let us overcome one temptation, mortify one evil desire, and the effect will be felt throughout our whole character. The habit of self-denial, patience, and endurance, is the same in all; let it be well learned in one particular, and not only will that temptation be weaker, but we in ourselves shall be stronger to subdue all that remain.

2. But by thus confining ourselves to the de-

tails of the particular temptation, we shall not hinder our learning a deeper lesson of the universal weakness of our nature, and of its susceptibility on all sides of being tempted. It is a very bitter and humbling truth, that after many years of a religious life we may be dangerously assailed even by sins which we had overcome, as we thought, at the very outset of our conversion to God. Yet so it is: after years of prayer, strict regularity, unblemished reputation, good works, alms, fastings, contemplation, all our religious professions will sometimes grow lofty and unsteady, and old sins, long ago forgotten, and never so much as thought of, make their re-appearance. So weak and unstable is our nature; so subtil and tenacious is sin; so rare is an entire conversion of the heart to God; so seldom is the foundation of the character laid deeply enough in perfect humility. We shall generally find that the point in which we have been tempted is not the only vulnerable point of our character; often not that which is chiefly so: that it was by the force of circumstances we were exposed to this or that particular temptation; and that in truth we might have been tempted in many other ways, and with more fearful success, as we have points really weaker, which were happily not attacked. It is a humbling truth to most of us who may think we have gained for ourselves a right

to use the language of saints, that the greater part of our virtue is in the absence of temptation. Now this is a lesson we ought, as soon as we have respite from trial, to set ourselves thoroughly to master. Let us pray God to give us light to see the universal weakness of our fallen nature; our awful proneness to offend. Perhaps if we had not been tempted, we should have fallen; that is, if we had not been made aware of our weakness, we should have insensibly declined until we had met some heavier fall. Therefore, in His mercy, He suffers us to go so near to the point of being overcome, that our fear and shame can hardly be greater; and then, when we are penetrated with a sense of danger and of horror, He interposes and saves us when of ourselves we should be lost. How many seeds of evil lie sleeping in us with the same imperishable vitality we see in the outward world, waiting only for stimulants to unfold it into life! The sins of our years before we repented, the sins of our childhood, are still virtually in our spiritual nature, held in check often by a weak and almost a broken thread of discipline, ready to reappear with the aggravations of our maturer state of light and profession. This is a truth we have need thoroughly and mournfully to learn.

3. And lastly, we ought to set ourselves to deepen the whole habit of our devotion: our hu-

miliations, abstinence, fasting, meditation, prayers, especially in our approaches to the holy Communion. Without doubt, the trial from which we have escaped was permitted as a warning to chasten us into a more fervent spirit. By it we ought to gain at least one degree of advance in holy living. It found us lukewarm, let it leave us fervent; it found us armed only in part, let it leave us clad in "the whole armour of God." There is much deep significance in St. Paul's charge to the Ephesians. "Be strong," he says, "in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Why does he say so emphatically "the *whole* armour," but because without it we are wholly naked: because our forefather stripped himself and us of all the glory which was our defence:[1] we were laid open in body and soul, eyes and ears, hand and heart, desire and will; and sin had entrance on all sides. We have universal need of this impenetrable mail, and can spare no part of it. "Wherefore," he says again, "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod

[1] Isaiah iv. 5.

with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."[1] It is a complete coat of mail, having in it a perfectness, leaving no part unarmed, covering the whole man; a girdle, a breastplate, sandals, shield, helmet, sword: what does this mean but the unity and perfectness of sanctity, the entire conversion and full devotion of the soul to God? This shews us how all His saints have overcome, and sat down in His throne. They were armed at all points; they counted no part of obedience or devotion small or of little import, knowing that the smallest imperfection will mar a whole defence; and that the whole armour is no stronger than its weakest part, that one breach will unlock a whole position. Therefore, if we enter upon a devout life, we must not do it by halves, but with decision. There must be no reserves, but a full surrender of ourselves, to be wholly sanctified "in spirit, and soul, and body." Such was the life of Abraham and Joseph, Moses and Daniel, apostles and saints, and of all whose warfare is ended, who have put off the armour of the cross, and put on the white raiment, where rest has no more dangers.

[1] Ephes. vi. 10-11, 13-17.

And we see also how it is that so many are overcome. Because they have armed themselves only in part. There is something wanting in their moral habit; some sin unmortified; some lust still living and importunate; or there was some neglect in their rule of devotion; in prayer or confession, or reading, or meditation, or self-knowledge; something left undone which leaves them naked in the day of battle.

This, then, is the use to which we should apply the seasons of rest following on our times of trial; to repair what has been marred in our conflict; to deepen and multiply our defences on every side; to renew the perfectness of our spiritual armour; by cutting off occasions of which sin has taken advantage; by binding ourselves with stricter resolves; by deepening our exercises of humiliation, prolonging our seasons of prayer, multiplying our works of charity; by watching more intently over the workings of our whole spiritual life, and devoting ourselves, with more perfect deadness and renunciation of the world and of our own will, to God. There is a time at hand when angels shall minister to them that overcome, in the paradise of God. There rest and refreshing shall be unbroken and eternal. Meanwhile we must endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Let us, then, when we can, flee temptation

with all fear; but if at any time you be encompassed by it, then turn, and cast your fear aside. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."[1] Here is a benediction and a crown. "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."[2] Here is strength and quietness. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."[3] Here is our Helper. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here is our safety. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."[4]

[1] St. James i. 12. [2] 1 St. Peter v. 10.
[3] Rev. ii. 10. [4] Rev. iii. 10, 11.

SERMON X.

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS iv. 15.

"We have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

ONE great and blessed truth contained in the mystery of the Incarnation is the sympathy of Christ: that as He is truly Man, so He truly and really partakes of our infirmities, and has a fellow-feeling of them with us. St. Paul had said a little before, in speaking of the Incarnation, "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."[1] The word 'tempted' here includes, of course, all trials of soul and body, such as sorrow, pain, anguish, as well as what we commonly call temptation: but it is to this last that we will now confine our-

[1] Heb. ii. 18.

selves. In the text, St. Paul adds, "yet without sin." And this raises a question which it concerns us much to consider. We can readily understand how our Lord's perfect humanity should sympathise with ours, because both are of one nature; but how He who is sinless should sympathise with us sinners,—this is the difficulty. He had no taste of the bitterness of conscious sin; that one greatest of all afflictions was positively unknown to Him. He made trial of all things of which our humanity in a sinless state is susceptible; but of that which comes upon us as sinners, it were blasphemy to suppose Him to have tasted—I mean, the fears, shame, remorse, self-abhorrence, which come with sin. It would seem that here His sympathy cannot reach: that it must be confined within the limits of our purer sorrows; such as affliction and pain. How, it may be asked, can He sympathise in repentance, deserved shame, and guilt of conscience? This is no easy question to answer: but so much of the consolation of true penitents must depend on it, that we shall do well to find, if we can, some reply.

It may be said, then, that this difficulty carries its own answer; for His sympathy with penitents is perfect, because He is sinless: its perfection is the consequence of His perfect holiness. And for these reasons:

First, because we find, even among men, that sympathy is more or less perfect, as the holiness of the person is more or less so. There is no real sympathy in men of a sensual, worldly, unspiritual life; unless we are to call that inferior fellow-feeling which ranks with our natural instincts, and is to be found also in the lower animals, by the name of sympathy. There is a natural pity, benevolence, and compassion, which, even among heathen, expresses itself in congratulations and condolences, and we may in one sense call it sympathy; but it is its lowest and most irrational form, little differing from the perceptions of cold and heat, sweet and bitter, which are common to all mankind. There is little distinct consciousness about it. And even these sympathies of nature are crossed and crushed by personal faults. Ambition, covetousness, selfishness, will extinguish them; much more actual familiarity with sin. Just as a man becomes infected by the power of evil, he ceases to sympathise with others. All his feelings centre in himself. Sin is essentially a selfish thing. It sacrifices every thing to its own lust and will. It is also peculiarly merciless. Reckless as it is of the evil of sin, and therefore lenient to the worst offenders, it is, nevertheless, peculiarly uncharitable, hard, and unfair. Sinners put the worst construction on each others' words and acts. They have no

consideration or forbearance. Their apparent sympathy is but a fellowship in the same disobedience. And so also the sympathy of the world; how hollow, formal, and constrained it is! How little soothing or consoling in our sorrows and trials are worldly friends, even the kindest hearted of them! And why, but because it is peculiarly the property of true sanctity to be charitable? and in the grace of charity is contained gentleness, compassion, tenderness of hand in touching the wounds of other men, fair interpretations, large allowances, ready forgiveness. These things ripen as personal holiness grows more mature. We may almost measure our advance in the life of God by the tenderness of our feeling towards sinners. The living compassion, active emotion of pity, the tears and tenderness with which the holiest men have ever dealt with the sinful, is a proof, that in proportion as sin loses its power over them, their sympathy with those that are afflicted by its oppressive yoke becomes more perfect. It may be said, indeed, that they know by present experience what is the distress and shame of sin; that they really have in them the original taint; and that it is by virtue of this that they are able so intimately to sympathise with the trials of others who are repenting. Nevertheless, it is most certain that this sympathy becomes more perfect in proportion as

their repentance is perfect, and their warfare turned into the peace of established sanctity; that is, in proportion as they cease to be like those they sympathise with in the very point of sinfulness.

And if we may venture a while to dwell on thoughts beyond our probation, in which some have presumed too far, may we not believe that this law prevails to perfect the mutual sympathy of those who are in the higher state of separation from this evil world? Of the invisible Church we can only speak by conjecture and hope, grounded upon such internal suggestions as are contained in truths undoubtedly revealed. We know that they are without sin. "He that is dead is free from sin."[1] We know that they are "made perfect."[2] We cannot doubt that they are replenished with charity—perfect in the sympathies of love and compassion—that they are knit one with another in a perfect bond of fellowship. And moreover, with their personal identity, doubtless, they retain a recollection of this world of sin, and of the trials, infirmities, and falls, from which they have been redeemed.[3] And their sympathy is more vivid, intense, and pure, because they are set free from sin and self. For what but these, our inborn evils, are the hindrances of our sympathy now in this world? In the midst of our truest

[1] Rom. vi. 7. [2] Heb. xii. 23. [3] Rev. v. 9.

compassion there is something which rises up to tinge it, and to infuse thoughts of self into it. They have the truest sympathy who are most perfectly dead to themselves. Therefore, of all the members of Christ's mystical body, they must mutually sympathise most perfectly who are most free from the taints of evil.

2. And from this our thoughts ascend to Him who is all-perfect; who being from everlasting Very God, was, for our sakes, made very Man, that He might unite us wholly to Himself. Above and beyond all sympathy is that of our High Priest. It stands alone in its incommunicable perfection. "Such an High Priest became us," that is, was required by our spiritual necessities, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."[1] Because we are sinners, we need One who is without sin to sympathise with us. How can it be reverently or safely thought that any sympathy can be perfect but His? Does not such a thought imply that we do not clearly distinguish what we are speaking of? He cannot, indeed, partake of the awful knowledge, derived from experience, which they possess who have ever consented to sin, who have ever been defiled by it. But that knowledge does not perfect sympathy: it only mars the perfection of the

[1] Heb. vii. 26.

person. Even the holiest must be delivered from this knowledge of sin before their sympathy is raised towards His unapproachable tenderness. In one sense it is true, that to have been darkened and defiled is the way to learn a bitter knowledge of sin. But it is only so because it inflicts on us the miseries which follow after sin, and scourges us through repentance to purity of heart, whereby we learn its hatefulness. None hate sin but those who are holy, and that in the measure of their holiness; and therefore in the Person of our blessed Lord there must exist the two great conditions of perfect sympathy: first, He has suffered all the sorrows and miseries which are consequent upon sin and distinct from it; next, He has, because of His perfect holiness, a perfect hatred of evil. And these properties of His human nature unite themselves to the pity, omniscience, and love, which are the perfections of His divine. To have sinned ourselves is not necessary to perfect our sympathy with sinners. God forbid the evil thought! Rather, it is the property of spotless sanctity to flow forth with the fullest stream of compassion. Who would mourn over a sister's fall so intensely as she who is all pure and full of sensitive fear of so much as a sullying thought? To have fallen and to have repented could add nothing to her

intense love and sorrow, to her absolute humiliation for another's transgression. Community in sin is not the source of sympathy, but participation in holiness. The knowledge of the misery of sin which our Lord learned by suffering temptation is no doubt far beyond any thing we can learn by consenting to it; for it is consent that so far destroys our true perception of it. Temptations are far more afflicting to holy minds than falls are to the less pure. And all through the life of the truest saint, even while the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, and the stillness of eternal peace reigns in it, there is, in proportion to the growth of sanctity, a growth also in his sorrow for sins long ago repented. His past falls come to be more intensely seen and abhorred. It is as he recedes from his former self, and passes out of the sphere of his past temptations, that he feels all their horror and deadliness. And this explains what we see in the lives of the holiest men—that as they have visibly advanced in holiness, they have multiplied their acts of humiliation and their discipline of repentance; and that instead of being thereby drawn from compassion to those who are still in their sins, they are of all men the most tender, pitiful, forbearing, and compassionate. None live for the conversion of souls so devotedly; none have so ready a sorrow for the

sins of others; none deal with them so lovingly, bind up their wounds so softly, console them, even against their own will, so persuasively. And why? Not because of their past sin, but because of their present holiness; not for what they have been, but for what they are; not because they have been sinners, but because they are saints. What they have learned of sin by past consent and defilement is a hindrance, not a help, to their true sympathy. They attain to this high grace of the mystical body of Christ just as they pass out of themselves into Him.

Now from all this we may see in what it is that our Lord, by the experience of humiliation in our flesh, has learned—wonderful word!—to sympathise with us.

Not in any motion of evil in the affections or thoughts of the heart; not in any inclination of the will; not, if we dare so much as utter it, in any taint or soil upon the soul. Upon all such as are destroying themselves in wilful commerce with evil, He looks down with a divine pity; but they have withdrawn themselves from the range of His sympathy. This can only be with those who are in sorrow under sin; that is, with penitents. It is in the suffering of those that would be cleansed and made holy that He partakes. Let us now see how we may draw comfort from this thought.

They who have sinned may go to Him in a perfect confidence that He is able to "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." We have something in Him to which we may appeal.

1. We may plead with Him on His own experience of the weakness of our humanity. None knows it better than He, not only as our Maker, who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust," but as Man, who made full trial of our nature "in the days of His flesh." He knows its fearful susceptibility of temptation—how in its most perfect state, as in His own person, it may be approached and solicited by the suggestions and allurements of the evil one. And if in Him it could be tempted to sin, how much more in us! May we not believe that it was out of the depth of His mysterious obedience that He spoke, when He said: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak?" He did not mean sinful flesh only, but humanity itself, the weakness of which was seen in Eden, and was proved by Himself in the wilderness, when "He suffered being tempted." When we confess our sins before Him, we may lay open all. Things we hardly dare to speak to any man, to any imperfect being, we do not shrink from confessing before Him—things which men would not believe, inward struggles, distinctions in intention, extenuating causes, errors of

belief,—all the manifold working of the inward life which goes before a fall. Imperfect friends treat all these things with a hard incredulity, or assign them but a light weight in the favourable scale; they fasten only on the prominent features of the case; they cannot throw themselves into our position; their knowledge of human nature is drawn from their view of their own state and character, often flattered and self-deceiving; and that makes them so censorious, upbraiding, unmerciful to lapsed sinners, and so suspicious, distant, and cold, even to penitents. No doubt the want of vivid faith to realise the awfulness of our Lord's presence is partly the reason why we are so much readier to make our confessions to Him than to a fellow-creature. We feel greatly, in the one case, the reality and the penitential character of the act, and little or not at all in the other. Again, confession to any man brings a peculiar shame, which our secret confessions do not involve. And yet, true as this may be, there can be no doubt that there is a more persuasive reason still. It is, that with men we are never safe from false judgments, and severe because imperfect censures; but with Him is perfect equity, fairness, tenderness. With all His awful holiness, there is something that draws us to Him. Though His eyes be "as a flame of fire," and the act of laying our-

selves open to Him is terrible, yet He is "meek and lowly of heart," knowing all our case, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

So also we must feel towards the elect angels, and all the world unseen, whose eyes, St. Paul seems to say, are on us—a cloud of gazers, ever looking down upon our course. They, too, in the measure of their perfection, are perfect; full of pity and of tender compassion; knowing of what spirit their King and Lord is; and like Him in charity to us. And yet it is to Him alone that we are drawn to address ourselves. Our ultimate account is not with them, but with Him. If He be pitiful to us, what more do we need? If He be gracious, they all, as comprehended in His perfection, are with us too. If we be sure of His sympathy, we are sure of theirs. They cannot satisfy the depth of our case, but He can and will.

We must go to Him, and place ourselves before Him; uncover our shame; fall to the earth; pray, if we can speak; if words fail, abase ourselves in silence; and let the silence of our confounded souls appeal to His sympathy who in the garden "fell on His face" under the burden of our infirmities. He will interpret our silence for us, and, by His perfect knowledge of our sins, put into our hearts pleas of deprecation and solace, which we ourselves neither know nor would dare to utter. Wonderful

is the Divine justice, and still more the Divine equity. He "weigheth the spirits;" He knows the shades and touches of our case. What to our dull sight would seem refinements, to His are realities in our spiritual probation; and with wonderful tenderness and most indulgent forbearance He notes and measures them all. In His judgment of penitents He is more gentle than they are to themselves. Pleas which they reject, He allows for them. While they are writing bitter things against themselves, He is recording the circumstances of palliation and excuse. They hardly dare believe that His face is lifted up in pity and forgiveness upon them; for His mercy is as great a mystery of faith as His Incarnation. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, then were we like unto them that dream." When His peace comes down again into our afflicted hearts, then, like the apostles, "we believe not for joy and wonder."

2. Again: we may appeal to His experience of the sorrow and shame which come by sin upon mankind. He suffered both as keenly and as fully as it was possible for one that was without sin. Wheresoever in the Psalms deeper notes of sorrow, lamentations greater than repentance, are heard, it is the voice of the Messiah speaking in prophecy. "My God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou

forsaken me? why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my complaint? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but Thou hearest not; and in the night-season also I take no rest. . . . As for me, I am a worm, and no man; a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God, that He would deliver him; let Him deliver him; if He will have him. . . . . I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart also in the midst of my body is even like melting wax. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums, and Thou shalt bring me into the dust of death."[1] "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."[2] "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in, even unto my soul. I stick fast in the deep mire, where no ground is; I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over me. I am weary of my crying: my throat is dry: my sight faileth me for waiting so long upon my God.

[1] Ps. xxii. 1, 2, 6-8, 14, 15. [2] Isaiah liii. 3, 4.

. . . . For Thy sake have I suffered reproof; shame hath covered my face. . . . I wept, and chastened myself with fasting; and that was turned to my reproof. I put on sackcloth also; and they jested upon me. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and the drunkards make songs upon me. . . . . Thou hast known my reproof, my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all in Thy sight. Thy rebuke hath broken my heart; I am full of heaviness: I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort me."[1] "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee: oh, let my prayer enter into Thy presence, incline Thine ear unto my calling. For my soul is full of trouble; and my life draweth nigh unto hell. . . . Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in a place of darkness, and in the deep. Thine indignation lieth hard upon me; and Thou hast vexed me with all Thy storms. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; and made me to be abhorred of them. I am so fast in prison that I cannot get forth. My sight faileth for very trouble: Lord, I have called daily upon Thee, I have stretched forth my hands unto Thee. . . . . Lord, why abhorrest Thou my soul, and hidest Thou Thy face from me? I am in misery, and

[1] Ps. lxix. 1-3, 7, 10-12, 20, 21.

like unto him that is at the point to die: even from my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind. Thy wrathful displeasure goeth over me, and the fear of Thee hath undone me."[1] What can we say of this inscrutable mystery of sorrow? Who would have dared to apply these words to the Son of God, if the Spirit of Christ in prophecy had not already done so by His servants? We can only say what the Spirit of Christ Himself hath said. Sorrow, fearfulness, shame, scorn, confusion of face, humiliation, abasement, exhaustion of body, fainting, trembling, blindness for very tears, what ever went beyond all these? "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger. From above hath He sent fire into my bones, and it prevaileth against them: He hath spread a net for my feet, He hath turned me back: He hath made me desolate and faint all the day."[2] What more can we say? All this came on Him because God "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin."[3] All that sin could inflict on the guiltless He endured; and to that experience of shame and sorrow we guilty may appeal. Though we suffer indeed justly, yet can He feel with us

[1] Ps. lxxxviii. 1, 2, 5-9, 14-16.

[2] Lament. i. 12, 13. [3] 2 Cor. v. 21.

though He did nothing amiss. Though in the bitterness of soul which flows from consciousness of guilt He has no part, yet when we take revenge upon ourselves in humiliation, and offer ourselves to suffer all He wills for our abasement, He pities us while He permits the chastisement to break us down at His feet. He looks in compassion on our heavy hours and mournful days, our secret indignation, our shame which burns inwardly, our bruised and trembling hearts. When vain remorse and resolution come too late, make us smite upon our thigh, and accuse ourselves in secret, He — let us hope, believe, and pray — will pity us with a loving and tender sympathy. "When our heart is smitten down within us, and withered like grass, so that we forget to eat our bread," it is a thought full of consolation, "that we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

Therefore let us ask for consolation from no other. Let us not go, I will not say to the world, and its fair words, smooth persuasions, shallow comforts; — for to these no man whose repentance has any depth or reality in it can bear to go; they are miserable, falsifying stimulants, which heat and bewilder the heart, and leave it open to terrible recoils of sorrow — but let us not go to books or to employment; no, nor even to the

consolation and tender love of friend, brother, wife, husband, spiritual guide; no, nor to the most perfect saint and nearest to Himself; but to Him for whose sake all these must be forsaken, in whom are all the fresh springs of solace which distil in scanty drops through the tenderest and fondest hearts. Let us go at once to Him. We are one with Him, by the mystery of His holy Incarnation, by the gift of our new birth. There is nothing can separate us from His sympathy but our own wilful sins. Let us fear and hate these, as for all other reasons, so above all for this, that they cut off the streams of His pure and pitiful consolation, and leave our souls to wither up in their own drought and darkness. So long as we are fully in His sympathy, let our sorrows, shame, trials, temptations, be what they may, we are safe. He is purifying us by them; teaching us to die to the world and to ourselves, that He only may live in us, and that our life may be "hid with Christ in God."

And again: that we may so shelter ourselves in Him, let us make to Him a confession, detailed, particular, and unsparing, of all our sins. Our safest self-examination is made upon our knees; our truest confessions are our self-examinations uttered aloud. Let us confess before Him morning and night our daily disobedience of thought,

word, and deed, the forbidden motions of our hearts, the faulty inclinations of our will; striving truly and thoroughly to know ourselves, and to lay ourselves bare with entire and self-abasing sincerity to Him. In this is true peace, deep consolation, calm unspeakable. This will keep our hearts waking, recall us when we wander, uphold us when we are weak. Whatsoever be our outward lot,—whether we be high or low, esteemed or outcast, held in honour or in scorn, trusted or distrusted,—this one thing is enough. What more can they desire who have the sympathy of Christ? What fellowship do they need who have His hourly presence? When men rebuke us, let us thank them, as helping our abasement; when they convince us of new faults, let us carry them in confession to our Lord. Reproofs are healing balms; censures are "spikenard very precious." The more they humble us, the more fully will He admit us to His perfect sympathy. O blind and short-sighted! when the world looks dark upon us, we are afraid. If the great or the many set down our lives as a folly or a dream, we begin to doubt, and half to believe what they say. We are tempted even to give way before their confident censures and their lofty commiseration. We are too proud to be pitied, and would sometimes almost conceal and cast off our sympathy with the Cross, that we

may take our share in the smooth and fair things of the world. But if we be His servants, the Cross must be our portion. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."[1] So that we be His, let us be with this content.

And lastly, let us so live as not to forfeit His sympathy. It is ours only so long as we strive and pray to be made like Him. If we turn again to evil, or to the world, we sever ourselves from Him. The dominion of any sinful habit will fearfully estrange us from His presence. A single consenting act of inward disobedience in thought or will is enough to let fall a cloud between Him and us, and to leave our hearts cheerless and dark. This all know, who after any sins of the temper or spirit, begin their accustomed prayers. They feel themselves in a new condition, and at a strange distance from Him; as if in broad day the sun had suddenly gone in. And besides positive sins, love of the world will shut us out from His sympathy altogether. Love of the world casts out the love of Christ. If, in spite of His word and warning, His life and cross, we will live on in this fallen world without fear or self-denial, as if it were not fallen; if we will love it, live in it and for it,

[1] St. Matt. x. 24, 25.

accept its flatteries and favours, then we must die with it. Follies, laughter, excitement, false happiness, bring bitter retrospect, burning consciousness of inconsistency and declension; and all these hide His presence from our souls. With these He has no sympathy: but only with the humble, bruised, and contrite; with them that forsake all that they may find Him, and follow Him whithersoever He goeth, in darkness and in light, in life and in death, counting all things loss, that they may "win Christ and be found in Him" in the morning of the resurrection.

SERMON XI.

SYMPATHY A NOTE OF THE CHURCH.

Isaiah lxi. 1.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

The Person of our blessed Lord is a type of the mystical personality of His Church. The notes by which He was manifested to the world as the true Messiah are the notes by which also His Church is manifested to the world as the true Church. Among many false Christs, there is but one true: He came first, and they arose after Him. Among many, there was none holy but He alone; none but He was the Saviour of all. "There is" but "one God, and one Mediator between God and man." He only is the "Holy One of God." He only is "the Saviour of all men," "the Lamb of

God, that taketh away the sin of the world." He is the one holy, universal Saviour of mankind, from whom His Church also derives the gifts and properties which are called signs or notes. The prophet Isaiah here gives another note, which indeed is not another, but a development of the same, by which the true Messiah should be known. He was to be the true Healer and Comforter of all, bringing good tidings of good, binding up broken hearts, loosing prisoners out of bondage, comforting mourners, sympathising with all, drawing all that are afflicted to Himself, by the consciousness of their own miseries, and by the attractions of His compassion. And this He did by His own divine love, by His perfect human sympathy, by His own mysterious experience as the Man of Sorrows. This was a note of the true Messiah which none could imitate. They might shew signs and wonders, and utter words of wisdom and moving persuasions; make a great shew of holiness and pity for mankind, and draw away many after them; but the reality was wanting: the meek and the broken-hearted, the prisoner, the bondsman, and the mourner, had in them something too deep, vivid, and piercing, to find rest until the one only and true Messiah should appear.

Now it is to this that we find our Lord Himself appealing in proof of His divine commission. Im-

mediately after He had been manifested by the descent of the Holy Ghost in His baptism, and had been tempted of the devil in the wilderness, we read that He "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."[1]

[1] St. Luke iv. 14-22.

And soon after we read: "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And He rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that He was Christ."[1]

Again: "And He came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of His disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all. And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God."[2]

Again we read: "John, calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto Him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto Thee, saying, Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another? And in the same hour He cured many

[1] St. Luke iv. 40, 41. [2] St. Luke vi. 17-20.

of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached."[1]

Such was the whole life of our blessed Lord. He was at all times encompassed by the multitude of sick and poor, widowed and desolate, mourners and penitents; all day long "there were many coming and going;" and He and His disciples had at times no leisure "so much as to eat."[2] They came "from all cities and villages," and "from all the country round about,"—Jews, Samaritans, Syro-Phœnicians, Greeks, and Gentiles; some to hear His words, some to touch the hem of His garment, some to ask Him to "speak the word only," that they might be made whole. He was the one only and all-sufficient Healer and Consoler of the sorrows of all flesh. And He drew to Him all that mourned in sins, in sicknesses, in desolation of heart. They clung to Him as their true and only Rest. In Him they found the answer to all their perplexities, to all their troubles of heart; He was the true solace of all their anguish. His words, His touch, His very looks of pity, soothed and healed

[1] St. Luke vii. 19-22. [2] St. Mark vi. 31.

their woes in body and in spirit. He was "a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones" was "as a storm against the wall." The prophecy was fulfilled in Him: "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."[1]

Such was His character and ministry; and such is the character and ministry of His mystical body, which is the Church. The anointing which was upon Him flowed down from the Head to the members. It consecrated apostles, prophets, martyrs, and saints: they were like Him, and prolonged His ministry on earth not so much by imitation as by union and incorporation with Him—by actual participation of the spirit, sympathy, and mind of Jesus Christ. So we find after His ascension. The Holy Ghost came upon them in the day of Pentecost, and thenceforward they opened their work of compassion and of spiritual mercy by works of healing and by words of consolation. It was indeed the dispensation of the Comforter: the Church was the almoner of the poor, the physician of souls, the solace of the afflicted; it spoke peace, forgiveness, ransom, purity, gladness of heart, to all.

[1] Isaiah xxv. 4; xxxii. 2.

And after the descent of the Spirit, the Church passed into that truest discipline of sympathy, the experience of sorrow. It was led, as it were, into the wilderness. In all the world it was tempted of the devil; by allurements and by afflictions he fought against it, making it thereby, and against his intent, to be partaker of the sufferings of Christ. Christians were sons of consolation, because they were men of sorrows; they inherited the title and the office of their Lord; they were called to "fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in the flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church."[1] It was this that gave to the apostolical ministry such a divine and persuasive power. All the world answered to its voice, because in all the earth there were the same afflictions, and in the Church the same power to heal. From the time of the humiliation of the Son of God, sorrow, suffering, and pain became sacred and holy. To the poor was given the first place in Christ's earthly kingdom: widows, orphans, and mourners were so many distinct orders, whom the Church nourished and consoled; little children were among its chiefest cares. The infirmities of human nature, old age and sickness, were more sacred still, and were tended with a greater love; for besides natural compassion in its most perfect form, the body of

[1] Col. i. 24.

Christ was quickened by His divine sympathy. By the anointing of the Holy Ghost, charity and tenderness were shed abroad in the hearts of His disciples; and, above all, they knew that, in ministering consolation to sorrow and suffering, they were ministering to Him who in our nature had made suffering and sorrow peculiarly His own. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." This is the true secret of the wonderful fact, that hospitals for the sick, poor, aged, and strangers, homes for the outcast and desolate, are peculiar to the Church of Christ. Heathenism had none. The cold and stately cities of the heathen world had no hospitals or houses of mercy. The very name of hospital was not in their language, because the grace of charity was not in their nature. Neither had they spiritual consolations, because the very idea of repentance and contrition was unknown. It was by the mystery of the Incarnation, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, by the regeneration of the faithful, by the knitting together of the members of Christ's mystical body, that the ministries of repentance and consolation were opened to mankind. The whole visible system of hospitals, asylums, almshouses, and the like, are the expression and means of fulfilling the ends of mercy for which the Messiah was anointed by the Spirit of the Lord.

It is His commission which was opened in the synagogue at Nazareth, extended throughout the earth, and prolonged unto this day. This is the peculiar note and office of the Catholic Church. It was not the work of civil powers, nor could be. Christian states have borrowed the principle, and reproduced cold and remote imitations of catholic charity; but the true test is, to look at political governments before Christ came into the world. Take Athens and Rome, the greatest and most vaunted polities the world ever saw as detached from Christianity. What did they for the alleviation of human sorrows in body or in spirit? Refinement, and civilisation, and warlike greatness, and high-sounding patriotism, and subtil philosophy, what did all these for the poor and miserable? Sorry comforters are the men of this world at their best estate. It may be very unpalatable and offensive to statesmen and politicians to be told, that they can do little or nothing more than borrow grace and wisdom of the Church they despise and patronise. Yet so it is. Kingdoms and states can retain the semblance and organisation of charity only so long as the Church quickens the mass of a people and the frame of government with its life. As that declines or withdraws itself, the distributions of state-charity dry up, and we hear of famishing poor and spiritual destitution.

So also with Christian sects. Whatsoever of charity they have among them is borrowed of the Church, and belongs to it. Their institutions, few and scanty as they are, do but copy and imitate the ministries of manifold charity through which the mystical body of Christ consoles meek, broken-hearted, and mourning spirits. And imitations as they are, they are short-lived — they die out. It has ever been an axiom in the Church, "The branch cut off withers, the stream cut off dries up." At the outset, sects are always distinguished by a great profession of sympathy with the spiritual and bodily sufferings of mankind. They found themselves on the alleged neglect or inability of the Church to minister to the contrite and afflicted. Their strength lies in their popularity, in a moving affectionateness and forward profession of disinterested solicitude, and in stealing away the hearts of the people. As Absalom said, "Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him."[1] But this lasts only for a time. The first zeal dies when the point is gained; labour and care grow slack, and self-

[1] 2 Samuel xv. 4, 5.

denying charity cold and scant; the system relaxes, and shews inherent weakness; makes many attempts to rally, and for a time seems to succeed; but is always going down, losing its hold on men's hearts, and with its hold losing its power of unity and control. At last men forsake it, because the deep yearnings of their hearts meet no sympathy; there is nothing to stay their souls on. They are stirred, excited, and vexed by its solicitations and upbraidings, its high-sounding words and cold affections; and in the end they are repelled by its antipathies, and fall into irreligion, or are drawn away by strong vital attractions of fervent charity in the Church. So end all schisms; sooner or later they cease to be. Howsoever long they may simulate the notes of the Church, adopt its language, and affect its charity, they sink by mere exhaustion at last. "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."[1]

1. What has been said will shew us the benefit of affliction to the Church. It is most certain that it was never so like to its Divine Head as when it suffered for His name's sake. It was never so full of the Holy Ghost, of humiliation, penitence, love, compassion, and unity, as in the ages of persecution. It cost too much in those

[1] St. Matt. xv. 13.

days to be a member of the Catholic Church for any to venture upon it but such as were willing to "lose their life for Christ's sake and the gospel," that they might "find it unto life eternal." They were knit together in a community of truth and spirit, of sufferings and sorrows; and the true sympathy of the members of one body ran throughout the whole. But when the tide began to turn, and the world to shine upon the Church, it was an easy and cheap thing to be a Christian; and it grew to be a custom and a fashion, and multitudes of cold, worldly, unsympathising men mingled themselves in the Church, and lowered its tone. As it has grown prosperous, it has left off to sympathise with the same vivid compassion for the sufferings of humanity. And yet through all ages of the Church there has been a succession of saints dead to the world, likened to Christ, bearing the tokens of the Cross, disciplined in sorrow, full of living sympathy with the sufferings of the poor and penitent. Individual characters indeed have come out with an energy and intensity like apostles and martyrs. Sometimes they have kindled and, for a while, have stirred whole churches to the same fervent charity. But the secret of their perfection was still the same, that they were partakers of their Master's cross, and that by sorrow they were endowed with the gift of compassion and of

love. The grace of their regeneration had been developed by the things that they had suffered. Outward crosses helped their inward mortification, and wrought for their perfection. They were endowed with a large measure of that anointing whereby their Lord was consecrated to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, and to comfort them that mourn. It is most certain that the Church has never been less in sympathy with the inner world of spiritual sorrow than when it has been outwardly prosperous. And from this we may derive a great consolation. Whatsoever adversity be upon us, it is manifestly a token not only of God's love, but of God's purpose to make us fitter for His work of mercy to the world. Just as these latter days set in upon us, and the first days seem to return in the last, just so may we all the more believe that He is calling His Church from earthly greatness, civil power, visible offices of counsel and authority in states and kingdoms, to its original separation from the world, to a life of unity, and to higher spiritual gifts.

Surely we may say of the Church what St. Paul says of individuals. If it be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then must it be of a doubtful legitimacy, and its commission to witness for God in the world of no certain warrant. There is something to fear in the sight of a

Church easy, peaceful, prosperous, well furnished with goods, confident of its own purity and of its own right judgment in all things. There is fear that it is, or will become, unsympathising, self-regarding, delicate, unhumbled; that it will one day hear from the mouth out of which goeth the sharp two-edged sword: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."[1] And this shews us how needless are our popular alarms. Many good men, when they see the outward system of the Church threatened, think the Church is in danger. Ought we not rather to say, that then it is safe—safe from surfeit and self-trusting, from hollowness and unreality; safe from false confidence, high thoughts of itself, and from the pride which goeth before a fall? Nay, even those greater chastisements and dangers—the persevering attempts of sectarian bodies to alienate the hearts of its people, and the

[1] Rev. iii. 17-19.

loss of many of its members by estrangement and perversion—even in these too there is safety. They are rebukes of love to deepen the interior life of the Church, to quicken a sense of compunction, to work in it the grace of humiliation, to raise the tone of its sympathy and the wisdom of its spiritual guides, to mature within it the gift of meekness, contrition, and spiritual mourning, and thereby to bring out into energy and act the great note of consolation and compassion which revealed the true Messiah at His coming.

2. Another thing we may learn from what has been said is, the design of God in afflicting the several members of the Church. It is to make them partakers of this true note of Christ's mystical body. We are all by nature hard and unsympathising. By our regeneration we learn to see the great truth of Christian compassion: we receive the grace through which we may be perfected in love to the members of Christ: but it lies dormant in us, until by the visitations of His hand it is unfolded into contrition and spiritual sorrow. It is God's deepest way of teaching: and what we learn by affliction is our truest learning. We are thereby brought to know things by tasting their reality. The mystery of sin in us, of which we are so unconscious, becomes a vivid sense of personal unworthiness, and a source of

deep humiliation and sorrow of heart. And these things make men strangely gentle and tender to others, full of pity and a softer tone. As they are taught to be themselves meek and contrite, so they learn also the exceeding fulness of the consolation which is in God; and that secret of consolation is shewn to them not for their own sakes alone, but for the sake of others. They are thereby constituted messengers of consolation, channels of the sympathy of Christ. As St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation."[1] It is God's way of dealing with us, to make those by whom He will comfort others, first to go themselves through the darkness and realities of the world of sorrow. Buoyancy, high spirits, untamed vigour, great

[1] 2 Cor. i. 3-6.

health of body, inexperience of the changes of life, make even the most amiable of men unapt to console the suffering and sorrowful. They cannot enter into the depth and reality of their trials. They are out of place in sick-rooms. Houses of mourning are not their natural home. With the kindest intentions and most sincere desire to minister comfort, they do not know what to say, or how to address themselves to the offices of consolation. There is an admonition in the fact, that our blessed Lord was tempted before He began His ministry. It was the discipline, if we may so speak, of His perfect sympathy. So is it with His servants. And this goes far to explain the trials which fall chiefly on the most favoured of His members; on those that partake His office of love; on those who minister to His mystical body.

Therefore, whatsoever trial comes upon us, let us not shrink from it, nor lose any part of the full lesson of humiliation which it is sent to teach. Let us fully give ourselves to it, to suffer all it has to lay on us. There are, it may be, deeper things to be known of our own sinfulness than we can know without the teaching of some special chastisements. By them we learn to be severe to none but to ourselves; to be gentle to the sins of others, as He that breaks not the bruised reed, while we are unsparing to our own. It is by the knowledge that

we are frail, and that we dwell on the very brink of great falls, if the grace of God should be for a moment withdrawn; by this we learn to pity them that are fallen, "to heal the broken-hearted," "to set at liberty them that are bruised." If He should deal with us as we deal with each other, who should stand in His sight? What unfair constructions, what hard views of the falls and failings, what hasty censures and unmerciful interpretations of other men do we indulge in! If we were true penitents; if we had learned the great lesson of humiliation; if we knew how to say with St. Paul, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting;"[1] then we should learn to be gentle in eye, hand, and heart, towards the sins and humiliations of our brethren. For this reason He sometimes lets us fall, to break our harsh, unsympathising nature, and puts on us a yoke of secret shame, which makes us for ever to look with tenderness and compunction on the sins of others.

So likewise in the sorrows of sickness or bereavement. None know the unspeakable depth of such wounds but they who have endured them. It is all in vain to try to imagine their keen and

[1] 1 Tim. i. 16.

penetrating anguish; how they make the whole soul faint, and the whole heart sick. Sorrow is a season of peculiar temptations; and there are very few who do not yield to waywardness, selfishness, or irritation, when the affliction is upon them. How deeply do they resent the want of vivid sympathy in others! What thoughts and feelings of unkindness find their way into wounded hearts, and make all their wounds tenfold more piercing!

If we truly knew what sorrow is, we should count it a high calling to be allowed to minister the least word of consolation to the afflicted. Therefore if we be called to suffer, let us understand it to be a call to a ministry of healing. God is setting us apart to a sort of pastoral office, to the care of the sick of His flock. There is a hidden ministry which works in perfect harmony with the orders of His Church; a ministry of secret comfort, diffusing itself by the power of sympathy and prayer. Within His visible Church are many companies of sorrow, many that weep alone, a fellowship of secret mourners; and to them the contrite and humbled are perpetually ministering, shedding peace, often unawares. Things that they have learned in seasons of affliction, long-pondered thoughts, realities learned by suffering, perceptions of God's love and presence,—all these are put in trust with them for the consolation of His

elect. They know not oftentimes to whom they speak. Perhaps they have never seen them, nor ever shall. Unknown to each other, they are knit in bonds higher than all ties of blood; they are joined and constituted in that higher unity which is the order of Christ's kingdom. When all the relations of this lower life shall be dissolved, the bonds of their heavenly kindred shall be revealed. Mourners and comforters shall meet at last in the holy city. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."[1]

[1] Rev. xxi. 4.

SERMON XII.

THE HOLINESS OF COMMON LIFE.

St. Mark vi. 3.

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him."

St. Matthew, in relating the same event, tells us that they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Such was the repute in which He was held in His own country, where we should have thought that an awe would have rested upon the hearts of all; and that His perfect meekness would have won their love. "When He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? . . . . And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour save in his own country, and

in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."[1] Now it cannot but appear very strange, that our Lord Jesus Christ should have been so like to other men that they should not have discovered Him to be something greater than themselves. We should have thought that the events attending first the annunciation, then His birth, the revelations to the shepherds and to the wise men, the warnings of God to Joseph, should have in some way come abroad, and invested the Child Jesus with awe and mystery; or, if these things were kept secret, yet we should have thought that there must have been in His very gestures and words some indications which should have made people expect from Him something more than from other men. Yet it would appear that for thirty years He lay hid, living among them unheeded, speaking and acting in the common way of men, so that He passed for the carpenter's son, Himself a carpenter, dwelling among His kinsmen, brethren and sisters as they are here called. They treated Him as one of themselves. Not only in the Temple at Jerusalem, where He might be unknown, did they ask, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"[2] but here, in His own city, they asked, in surprise and incredulity, "Whence hath this

[1] St. Matt. xiii. 54-57. [2] St. John vii. 15.

man this wisdom?" From all this it would seem plain, that our blessed Redeemer did not greatly differ, in what may be called His private life, from those about Him; that He dwelt under the roof of Joseph and Mary, in childhood subject to them, in manhood serving them with a perfect filial duty, in plainness, poverty, retirement. He, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person, lay so concealed in the paths of ordinary life, that His own townsmen knew Him only as the carpenter, as an unnoted member of Joseph's household.

Now there are some very important practical truths to be drawn from this fact: truths full both of comfort and of instruction to many kinds of people. What is more common than to hear people excusing themselves from the obligation of leading a devout life, on the plea that they are compelled to mix with the world? Others, again, who earnestly desire to keep themselves unspotted from the world, are exceedingly distressed at the distractions and hindrances of society. Some think that all high counsels of devotion are for solitaries, or persons whom God has called out of the tumult of the world to serve Him in the shelter of sorrow, sickness, or retirement. They give up the very thought of aiming at higher attainments; they

call them visionary, unpractical, impossible. And even those who earnestly strive to live above the context of life by which they are surrounded, are tempted to think that, if they would live nearer to God, they must abandon life and its manifold exactions.

We may learn, then, from this view of our Lord's example:

1. First, that the holiest of men may to all outward eyes appear exactly like other people. For in what does holiness consist but in a due fulfilment of the relative duties of our state in life, and in spiritual fellowship with God?

Now the relative duties of life are universal. Every man has his own. There is nothing peculiar but that which belongs to each man's peculiar station, and that station explains away the peculiarity of his acts and ways. Whatever we are, high or lowly, learned or unlearned, married or single, in a full house or alone, charged with many affairs or dwelling in quietness, we have our daily round of work, our duties of affection, obedience, love, mercy, industry, and the like; and that which makes one man to differ from another is not so much what things he does, as his manner of doing them. Two men, the most opposite in character, may dwell side by side, and do the very same daily acts, but in the sight of God be as far apart as

light and darkness. Saints and sinners may alike fulfil the visible acts of their several callings in life; but with what diversity of motives, with what contradiction of aims, with what opposite tempers, purposes, affections of heart! The very same round of acts may be to one man the subject-matter of a holy life, to another the occasion of habitual offences. At all events, the habit of life in each is ostensibly the same, and there is nothing peculiar or remarkable in those things in which sinners and saints alike partake. The commonplace familiar aspect of every-day life draws a veil over the inward posture and actings of the mind, as over the holiness of our Lord. And if in these things holy men are not outwardly distinguishable from others, they are still less so in the spiritual fellowship which is between themselves and God. Into this no eye but that which seeth in secret can enter. No man can say what passes in the closet when the door is shut; in secret meditations at eventide; in nightly vigils; in wakings before the morning-watch; in days when the spirit goes softly before God, with fasting, and compunction, and tears which flow inwardly upon the soul.

2. Again: we may learn, what, indeed, is implied though not expressed in the text, that true holiness is not made up of extraordinary acts. We may say in this as the Apostle asked of the

Church in Corinth: "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"[1] Although we know, indeed, and in cooler and clearer moments acknowledge, that it is not only those who are called of God to great and emphatic works of faith and charity, that are truly devout; yet we are somehow often tempted to overstep the lines which are drawn along our ordinary path. This is especially true of persons at the outset of a religious life, or in the first awakening of repentance, or under the deep thrilling impressions of God's presence in sorrows or afflictions. We are tempted to give way to excited feelings, to exaggerated words, to unnecessary and almost ostentatious acts; and that with no desire to be seen of men, and to have our miserable reward in this world, but because we fancy that common things do not give scope enough for a devoted life; that a wider field, and broader lines, and bolder strokes, are needed.

And this no doubt is the secret of many grave and sometimes irremediable mistakes. Sometimes, under the belief that in an ordinary life of duty they could not serve God with devotion, men have left their plain path of duty, and committed themselves suddenly to holy orders; or they have made

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 29, 30.

sacrifices of which they have afterwards repented; or bound themselves by vows which have turned to yokes and snares; or, like the foolish builder, have committed themselves to public professions, which they have afterwards shamefully abandoned. Now what is all this, but the mistake that holiness is to be attained more easily by going out of our ordinary path than by abiding in it? But if there be any thing true, it is this: that, for the greater part of men, the most favourable discipline of holiness will be found exactly to coincide with the ordinary path of duty; and that it will be most surely promoted by repressing the wanderings of imagination, in which we frame to ourselves states of life and habits of devotion remote from our actual lot, and by spending all our strength in those things, great or small, pleasing or unpalatable, which belong to our calling and position.

3. And, once more, we may learn, that any man, whatsoever be his outward circumstances of life, may reach to any the highest point of devotion. I do not say that all states of life are equally favourable; far from it; but that outward circumstances are only hindrances, not absolute prohibitions. It is most true, that they who are permitted by the Providence of God to withdraw from worldly employments, to wait at His altar, to be content with food and raiment, to live lives of self-denial,

in works of love and spiritual mercy, being themselves without carefulness, and disburdened of the many things which cumber other Christians; that is, in one word, who are permitted to choose with Mary that "one thing needful," "that good part which shall not be taken away from" them; most true it is, that such persons may, and do, for the most part, more surely and deeply than others, perfect in their souls the work of humiliation, penitence, and devotion.

But this is a lot not given to all. And it is most certain, that for those who are not called from the duties of the world and the cares of life, the path in which God is pleased to lead them must be the best and safest. Nay, one among the wisest of the Church's early teachers[1] tells us that the most perfect man is he who, in the midst of the charges, and cares, and relations of life and home, yet attends upon the Lord without distraction. Such a way of life will indeed require greater spiritual strength. For worldly cares weigh down the soul, and entangle it in manifold obstructions. To be in the world, and yet dead to it, is the highest reach of faith.

But there is no need for the great multitude of Christians to weigh these states in a balance

[1] S. Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. 874.

against each other. This at least is most certain, and makes all such comparisons unprofitable—I mean, that there is hardly one of us whose outward circumstances in life do not admit of a far higher reach of devotion than we actually attain. We repine at the obstructions of our outward lot, as if they were the cause of our wandering thoughts, careless hearts, selfish wishes, inattentive prayers, unchastened tempers, languid affections. We think we should do better in some other condition, under some other circumstances, with somewhat less of ordinary life, and somewhat more of uncommon events and practices. And yet the hindrance is not from *without* but *within* us. It is not only in the household, or in the market-place, or at the seat of custom, or in the crowd of men, that this, which makes our religious character imperfect, cleaves to us, and defeats our wishes and intentions. We should carry it with us into a cell. It would lower the tone of our devotions in a solitude, or even at the foot of the altar: for what is it but the want of fervour and perseverance, a lack of inward force and of spiritual affections? What do the examples of Holy Scripture teach us? They shew us that those who have been called to serve God out of the world, so to speak, are few; and that they who have served Him in the world are the multitude of His

saints. Samuel was brought up in the temple; Elijah dwelt in Carmel; Elisha in the school of the prophets; John Baptist in the wilderness; the Apostles forsook all for Christ's sake and the Gospel: but Enoch walked with God, and had sons and daughters; Abraham had great possessions; Joseph governed Egypt; Moses was king in Jeshurun;[1] Jeremiah dwelt in a royal court; Daniel was third ruler in the kingdom of Babylon; Nehemiah was prince and governor in Jerusalem.

So in all ages the saints of the Church have been mingled in all the duties and toils of life, until age or the events of Providence set them free. There was nothing uncommon about most of them but their holiness. Their very lot in life ministered to them occasions of obedience and humiliation. They sought God fervently in the turmoil of homes and armies, of camps and courts; and He revealed Himself to them in love, and became the centre about which they moved, and the rest of all their affections.

There is no reason why we should not likewise live unto God, whatsoever be our trade, labour, profession, or state. A poor mother may live after the example of the Blessed Virgin in lowliness and thoughtful care, pondering in her heart, watching

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 5.

over her children, and fostering them for God, leading them up to His temple, teaching them betimes to be about their heavenly Father's business. Children may grow up in affection, patience, gentleness, and uniform obedience, like our Lord. A poor labouring man may live by the sweat of his face, tilling the earth, or working with the tools of his craft, as "the Carpenter" at His toil, and yet have his "life hid with Christ in God." Statesmen, merchants, lawyers, soldiers, all they who "maintain the state of the world," may reach to any height of Christian devotion. There is no limit to their advance, except in the measure of their own energy, zeal, self-discipline, and purity of heart.

What has been said may suggest many thoughts of comfort in the present state of the Church among us. It cannot be denied that the visible marks of sanctity are but faintly seen. The world has outgrown the Church, and left its character and impressions every where. In the whole civil and social state, in public and private life, in our sciences of government and schemes of civilisation, in our institutions, undertakings, and usages, that which meets us every where is the world, its powers, wisdom, self-trusting, its softness, polish, and refinement. The notes of the Church are suppressed and seldom seen: the counsels, precepts,

laws of holy living, the public solemnities of a visible religion, are well nigh withdrawn from our personal, domestic, and political life. Where are the high days of the Church's joy, as in the former days of old? The very consolations of Holy Scripture have become unmeaning to us. Who knows what is promised when it is said, "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel?"[1] Where are our feasts of Christian joy? Chilled off into a formality, which to the multitude is tame, wearisome, and inexpressive; or the mercies of God are suffered to pass without any token of acknowledgment. And for our public fasts, even Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment and condemn us. "The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink

[1] Isaiah xxx. 29.

water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God."[1] But we have come to partake in great public wrongs, and can bear to be smitten by awful public chastisements, without confession or humiliation. And, moreover, those visible institutions and privileged rules of life by which repentance, devotion, and charity manifested themselves in other days, are gone. The surface of religion among us is a monotonous plain, unbroken by variety; marked by few visible features of devotion, standing out in relief from the level of ordinary life.

We may hope, indeed, that these things are the excess of a recoil from a popular system, which may have been more visible than real; and that the secrecy of private devotion is a sensitive and not unwise retirement, into which men are provoked by the coarse and unfeeling exhibition of fanatical and self-conscious professors. Let us hope that there is yet a severe reality at heart, that men have been taught to apprehend with an intense and even overstrained interpretation the words of our Lord in the midst of an ostentatious and obtrusive religious profession: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound

[1] Jonah iii. 5-8.

a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. . . . . Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."[1] It is, I think, certainly true, that what the confusions and worldliness of these latter days have made inevitable, these words have been understood even to enjoin; and we may

[1] St. Matt. vi. 1-6, 16-18.

therefore take great comfort in the thought, that under the cold, naked exterior of our public religion, and the reserve of private habits, there does exist a deep and severe reality of spiritual life; that under the most unlikely and adverse appearance there lies hidden a real work of mortification. We read even of a king of Israel, "that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh."[1] Let us hope that God, who weigheth the spirits, does discern the deep moving of the inmost heart, the tokens of the cross, the mind of Christ, in those who, to us, seem no more than just, temperate, amiable, and gentle; and that many who appear to be drifting to and fro on the waterflood, are held by "an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."[2] God only knows. We may perhaps have spoken, and even dwelt, with men who had in them the mind of apostles and martyrs. We have known them only by their outward aspect, as they who said in His own country, "Is not this the carpenter?"

Let us hope this, I say, of others: but we must do more than hope it of ourselves; here there can be no mistaking. We are within the closet even when the door is shut. What is seen by our Fa-

[1] 2 Kings vi. 30. [2] Heb. vi. 19.

ther in secret is not hidden from us. Whether or no there be, under our every-day life, the devotion of a saintly mind, can be no matter of doubt to those who desire to know themselves. It is plain, from what has been said, that if it be not so with us, the fault is not in our outward state, nor in its circumstances, but in ourselves. We may therefore rest assured, that the duties of the day and fellowship with God are enough to lead us on to any measure of Christian perfection. But these must not be separated. It is impossible for us to make the duties of our lot minister to our sanctification without a habit of devout fellowship with God. This is the spring of all our life, and the strength of it. It is prayer, meditation, and converse with God, that refreshes, restores, and renews the temper of our minds, at all times, under all trials, after all conflicts with the world, when our own carnal will and frailty has betrayed us to our fall, and breaches have been made in our most stedfast resolutions. By this contact with the world unseen we receive continual accesses of strength. The counter-working of the world is thereby held in check. As our day, so is our strength. Without this healing and refreshing of spirit, duties grow to be burdens, the events of life chafe our temper, employments lower the tone of our minds, and we become fretful, irritable, and impatient.

Our outward circumstances become provocations and offences. A busy life, or one that is full of this world's duties and gifts, needs much devotion to sanctify it. The less directly our outward lot disposes us towards inward holiness, the more need have we of recollection, self-chastisement, and prayer. Without these we shall never be able to walk with circumspection, in gentleness, sincerity, pureness, and love. Our hidden life with God is the very soul of our spiritual being in our own home, in the church, and in the world.

And so also, on the other hand, it is impossible for us to live in fellowship with God without holiness in all the relative duties of life. These things act and react on each other. Without a diligent and faithful obedience to the calls and claims of others upon us, our religious profession is simply dead. To disobey conscience when it points to relative duties irritates the whole temper, and quenches the first beginnings of devotion. We cannot go from strife, breaches, and angry words, to God. Selfishness, an imperious will, want of sympathy with the sufferings and sorrows of other men, neglect of charitable offices, suspicions, hard censures of those with whom our lot is cast, will miserably darken our own hearts and hide the face of God from us. It is mere folly to go from a breach of the second great commandment to at-

tempt the fulfilment of the first. When a man is ill at ease with others, he is sure to be so with God. That much-abused proverb is most true, "Charity begins at home." It is but Pharisaism and self-delusion for a man that is "a lion in his house and frantic among his servants"[1] to make profession of prayer and fellowship with the Lamb of God.

Let this, then, be our token. Let us whose lot is cast in these latter times, when the Church has once more become almost hidden in the world, be of the holy fellowship of Him who to the eyes of men was only the carpenter, but in the eyes of God was the very Christ. Let us look well to our daily duties. The least of them is a wholesome discipline of humiliation: if, indeed, any thing can be little which may be done for God. If we were worthy of greater things, He would call us: if He do not, He bids us to know ourselves better, to mortify vanity and high thoughts of our own powers to do Him service. Every state has its peculiar graces. They who are blessed with full homes and many friends are called to goodness, mercy, long-suffering, tender affection towards the burdened and afflicted. The Jews would have no man to be a judge but one that had children, that he might know how to shew mercy as a father. There is a discipline of humanity in the cares and burdens of

[1] Ecclus. iv. 30.

life which mellows the hearts of the just. Joseph is their type and example. Others are otherwise led and disposed of, and are thereby called to toil, hardness, deadness to self, patience, humiliation; to be content with God alone; to have charity to God's elect, boldness for the truth, suffering for the Church, and to receive in the "body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

SERMON XIII.

THE WORLD WE HAVE RENOUNCED.

St. John xv. 18, 19.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Perhaps there is no word more commonly in our mouths than 'the world;' and yet hardly any to which we attach less clear and certain meaning. Indeed, the sense intended by it varies according to the character of the person that uses it. Some people denounce the world as unmixed evil; some say it is for the most part good, or at least innocent; some profess to see its deceitful workings every where; some will see them no where: some make their religion to consist in a separation from the world; some think the field of their religious duty is in the world: in a word, there is little or no agreement or certainty but in this, that there is such a power and reality as the world, and that it is of great

moment to us to know what it is. Let us therefore endeavour to come at something better than these floating notions about it.

Our Lord here says to the apostles, that the world hated Him, and would hate them; and also, that they were not of the world, because He had chosen and taken them out of it.

Now to this it is sometimes said, that our Lord spoke of the unenlightened world before and at His coming, of the world by which He was rejected and crucified; that since He overcame sin and death, and cast out the prince of this world, it has been won to Himself; that now it is the Christian world. And again, that these words are spoken to the apostles, not to us; to those who had to encounter the world while unconverted, and by their words and sufferings to turn it to God: that they were indeed taken out of it, all unchanged as it was then; but that when the world became Christian, our place was no longer out of it, but in it; and it was no longer opposed to Christ and His servants, but united to them; so that it is fanaticism, or spiritual pride, or a blind and shallow view, to speak of the world we see in the words spoken by our Lord of the world then; and that it savours of some great personal faults, if we set ourselves in opposition to it, and bring ourselves under its censure and dislike. It is said with

much force, that the ages of polytheism and idolatry, of atheistical philosophy and sophistical schools, of impure and turbulent rites, lascivious and bloody spectacles in the theatres and the circus; of public tyranny, open political corruption, and all that complex spirit of lordly and daring enmity against God, which reigned in and through these things, has been cast out of Christendom; that it has been exorcised, and the unclean presence is gone out of it; that it now sits at Christ's feet clothed and in its right mind. We are bid to look at the visible Church throughout the world; at the holiness of saints, the devotion of princes, the purity of tribunals, the wisdom of legislatures, the multiplication of Christian states, the stedfast order of nations, their internal peace, the safety of the weak, the consolations of the poor, the reign of right and truth in all dealings of men, the sanctity of homes, and the high perfection of private life; the public honour of religion, the crowds that fill the churches and kneel at the altars of Christ. Can it be said that all this is the antagonist of Christ; that this is the world that hates Him, and out of which He has chosen you? Is not this to speak evil of His own work, and to set yourselves against Him in it? to slight His presence in turning from it, and to commit a kind of schism in separating from it? No one can deny that there is much

force in this; and many people who desire to walk in the way of perfection are perplexed by it: for after all, it seems strange and unlikely to them that the world which they renounced in their baptism should be the world at Christ's coming — the world before Constantine — a thing of history. It was a safe vow, which we could never be tempted to break, and no hard thing to renounce that by which we could never be assailed. But this will not satisfy any earnest conscience. We must find, therefore, some better and fuller view; and for this purpose we shall do best to begin at the beginning of this entangled subject.

In its original sense, the world is altogether good. By the work and will of God it is all sinless and pure. "The earth and the world is the Lord's."[1] It means no more than the creation of God. It is only in its second intention that the world has an evil sense; but that sense is its prevailing and its true one. The first intention of it is cancelled for awhile, until the day of the restitution of all things.

In the second sense the world is the creation of God as it is possessed by sin and death. So subtil and far-spreading is the original sin of man, that no living soul is without a taint. The living powers of the first man fell under the bias of evil, and the

[1] Ps. xxiv. 1.

same has more or less swayed every one since born into the world. There is no doubt that sin becomes more complex and energetic as time goes on, —that there is in the character of the world a law of deterioration, like that which we see in the character of individuals. The original sin was not a measured quantity, so to speak, of evil, which, like a hereditary disease, might exhaust itself in the course of two or three descents. Every several generation renewed it afresh; every several man reproduced it, and sustained the tradition of evil by example, habit, and license; it was perpetuated in races, in nations, in families; by custom, usage, and law. And what is this great tradition of human thought and will, action and imagination, with all its illusions, misjudgments, indulgences, and abuses of God's creatures, but the world? We mean by it something external to our minds, and yet not identical with the creation of God; something which has thrust itself between it and us; something parasitical, which has fastened upon all God's works, and has wound itself into its inmost action, and into its very being. For instance, Enoch, as we are told, was born into an idolatrous race: he found himself surrounded by a mighty delusion, which had grown up out of no one mind, or people, or age; it was the accumulated error of centuries, in which man had been forgetting God.

And this great lie offered itself to him as a truth and a reality. It forced itself upon him with all the presumption of an established and long-admitted doctrine.

So, again, in the case of Abraham, until God called him out from his kindred, who "served other gods beyond the flood;" and so, likewise, with those born in the times of the Judges, and in the times of the last kings of Judah, when the abominations of the Gentiles had filled the inmost chambers of Jerusalem. In all these there was a system of belief and practice, which spread corruption throughout the public and private life of the Jews; and that system was the worship and the kingdom of the God of this world, the great heathen tradition of mankind which had re-entered the precincts of Israel. And what makes this the more striking is, that they were specially God's elect. Abraham was chosen out of this world, and his children in him. Separation from the world was the very law of their existence as God's people. The world was, in all truth, external to the family of Abraham. In one sense it may be said that they "were not of the world," and that God had chosen them "out of the world." And this continued to be true of them to the very last, through their captivity, and their restoration, down to the time of Christ's coming. They were strictly an elect peo-

ple; and around them lay the world, out of which they were taken and set apart.

And yet it was specially out of this very people that our Lord chose His apostles. It was of that very people that He said, "If the world hate you, ye know it hated Me before it hated you." This was not said of Moabites or Idumæans, but of Israelites. All elect and separate as they were, they were the world still; and they hated Christ, and crucified the Lord of glory. And it was of this election of His apostles from among God's people Israel that He said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Now, what does this mean, but that the world was in the very heart of Jerusalem—in its Priests, in its Levites, in its Scribes, in its Elders, in Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians; in its ecclesiastical order, in its civil state, in its gates, at its altars, in the midst of the temple, in its rulers' houses, in its feasts and fasts, in the council and in the sanhedrim, in all houses, in all chambers, in all hearts: that the great world-wide tradition of lust, pride, unbelief, selfishness, will-worship, prejudice, blindness, with all its vanities, pomps, glitter, and lies, was spread like a net over the whole face of the land? They had been born, as Abraham and Enoch, into the

midst of an age at enmity with God. The world had interwoven itself with the whole framework of national and individual life; and between the presence of God and the conscience of man had hung a film, ever-shifting and many-coloured, which tinged and distorted all things. The great tradition of the fall weighed upon the whole order of life in Galilee and Judea. The revelation of God was darkened by the grossness of their spiritual state. The work of grace which God had wrought by prophets and seers, and all the forerunning tokens and types, which should have prepared them for the Son of God, for His sorrows, and for His spiritual kingdom, were all misread by their eyes of flesh. When they read Moses and the prophets, the world was their expositor. As they lusted, so they believed. Therefore they eat and drank, planted and builded, married and gave in marriage, disputed in their synagogues, went to law with the poor, devoured the houses of widows and the bread of orphans, prayed in public, fasted visibly, gave alms with observation. This was the world out of which Christ elected His apostles,—the state of fleshly indulgence, dull infidelity, confident profession, fatal non-expectation of the day of His coming.

He first broke up the way through this bondage of death, and called them to follow Him forth into the realities of God's kingdom. All that they

were born into they shook from them, and stood afar off, as from a thing under a curse.

The world, then, out of which they were taken, was not the Gentile world, but the disobedience of the visible Church.

We have here a clue which will lead us safely out of this question.

1. First, it is true to distinguish between the Church and the world, as between things antagonist and irreconcilable: for the Son of God, by His incarnation and atonement, and by the calling and mission of His apostles, has founded and built up in the earth a visible kingdom, which has no other Head but Him alone. That visible kingdom is so taken out of the world, that a man must either be in it or out of it; and must, therefore, be either in the Church or in the world. In the visible kingdom of Christ are all the graces and promises of life; in the world are the powers and traditions of death. We know of no revealed salvation out of that visible kingdom; we can point to no other way to life. There is but one Saviour, one Mediator, one Sacrifice for the sin of the world; one baptism for the remission of sins; one rule of faith; one law of holiness. "We are of God," writes St. John, "and the whole world lieth in wickedness."[1] "I have manifested Thy name,"

[1] 1 St. John v. 19.

saith our Lord, "unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word. . . . I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. . . . . I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."[1] He made His Church so separate and visibly distinct from the world, that it became a broad and enduring witness of His advent, and of His divine mission to mankind. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word;" that is, for the catholic Church to the world's end: "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." It is needless to multiply quotations in a thing so plain. It is certain that, in a very true, deep, and ineffaceable sense, the Church is so taken out of the world as to be absolutely separate from it, and opposed to it. It is so by the gifts of election and regeneration; by the graces of

[1] St. John xvii. 6, 9, 14-16, 20, 21.

righteousness, illumination, and sanctity; by the laws, precepts, counsels of obedience; by the traditions, sacraments, and institutions of God. And this is a separation and distinctness not simply external or relative, as of things ceremonially consecrated; though even so, it would be no less actual; but it is parted from the world as a leavened mass from a mass unleavened—as a field in which seed has been sown, from a field lying fallow; that is, by the unseen presence of Christ, the inward endowments and virtual possession of righteousness and of immortal life. It is, therefore, no less than a covert denial of the great mystery of the regeneration, to confound this separation and opposition between the Church and the world; and it has been commonly found, that wheresoever faith in the sovereign grace of God to us in our baptism has declined, there the distinction between the Church and the world has been confounded, and finally lost. In this sense, then, they that are of the world are not of the Church, and they that are of the Church are not of the world. There can be no real fellowship or intercourse between those that are of the body of Christ and those that are not. The only intercourse the Church has ever held with the heathen has been either such as St. Paul permitted to the Christians in Corinth, who might still maintain the relations of outward kindliness

with unbelievers, or direct missions for the conversion of nations to the faith. There could be no closer fellowship; for as the world had its own complex scheme of political, social, and personal life, so had the Church, over and above its positive institutions, a whole moral character, founded on precepts and counsels both of obedience and devotion altogether separate and distinct. The communion of saints could no way blend with the fellowship of the impure. It had no unity with the violent, covetous, and unholy, or of those who believed in nothing unseen. The personal habits of the Christian, aiming at the example of the Son of God, could in no way adjust themselves to the habits of the heathen. And this St. Paul intends in his counsels about the marriage of Christians. There was a moral and formal contrariety between the rules of conduct and aim on both sides, which held the Church and the world apart.

2. But farther, it is no less true to say, that the world, which in the beginning was visibly without the Church, is now invisibly within it. So long as the world was heathen, it warred against the Church in bitter and relentless persecutions. The two great traditions—the one of God, the other of the world, the powers of the regeneration and of the fall—kept their own integrity by contradiction and perpetual conflict. The Church stood alone—a

kingdom ordained of God, having her own princes and thrones, her own judges and tribunals, her own laws and equity, her own public customs and private economy of life. All these ran clear from a source freshly opened, and in a channel newly sunk to preserve their purity. The streams of the world had not as yet fallen into the river of God: its waters were transparent still. It was when the conversion of individuals drew after it, at last, the whole civil state; when the secular powers, with all their courts, pomps, institutions, laws, judicatures, and the entire political order of the world, came into the precinct of the Church; then it was that the great tradition, as I have said, of human thought, passion, belief, prejudice, and custom, mingled itself with the unwritten usages of the Church. I am far from saying this with the intention of those who declaim against those ages, and sit in judgment on the Church. All this seems to imply a shortsighted and irrelevant habit of mind. Without doubt it was as much the design of God that the Church should possess itself of the empire of the world, as that Israel should possess itself of a fixed habitation in the land of Canaan, and that David's throne should be set up in Jerusalem. The typical or temporal import of this is no objection. It was the design of Heaven that the Church should overspread mankind, and, like the leaven,

work mysteriously in the whole world. Neither is it any objection to say, that the Church has thereby lost in purity or devotion, and the like. It is enough that it is doing God's behests, grappling with the world in its own precincts, and in its seats of power and pride. Whatever be the apparent tide of the struggle, we are sure of this, that the work of God is being wrought by the Church upon the world. When the world seems to prevail, yet even then the elect are being made perfect. And it is equally certain, that the probation of our faith is all the more keen and searching. When Noah was shut into the ark, his faith had a strong trial to endure; but he was shielded from manifold temptations. It was after he had again possessed the earth that he was tempted and fell.[1] In the beginning the Church had a sorer and a more fiery trial: but who can say that the peril of souls is not greater now? In those days it was no hard matter to discern between the world and the Church. But now our very difficulty is, to know what is that world which we have renounced; to detect its snares, and to overcome its allurements. It is no longer an external adversary, raging, reviling, and wearing out the name of Christ. Now it is within. The world is inside the fold, baptised, catechised, subdued, specious,

[1] Gen. ix. 20, 21.

and worshipping. This is a far more dangerous antagonist.

According to the sure promise of Christ, and by the power of His presence, the Church has in a wonderful manner preserved inviolate the whole tradition of the Faith. All that He taught and commanded for the perfection of His elect has been kept spotless in the midst of this evil world. But no one can read the history of Christendom without discerning the same law of decline and deterioration, which has from the beginning obtained among mankind, prevailing, not over the Church as it is a work of the Divine presence, but over the moral, intellectual, social condition of nations professing Christianity. It would be out of place here to give detailed examples; but I may just refer to the corruption of Christian Africa in the time of St. Augustin, and of England under the later Saxon kings, and of the north of Italy in the sixteenth century. It is most certain that there is a power always working in Christian nations, which is not of God, nor of the Church, but of the world, of that corruption which every generation reproduces, and of that aboriginal evil which has been always working in our fallen race, unfolding itself in endless forms, and perpetuating its effects by a most subtil transmission from age to age. To be more particular:

I will say, that the state of public morals, the habits of personal and social life, popular amusements, and the policy of governments, so far as they are not under the direct guidance of religion, are examples of the presence and power of that which is properly and truly called the world. And nobody need fear to add, that the tone and moral effect of all these, except when they are especially guided by religion to a Christian use and purpose, is almost always, in a greater or less degree, at variance with God. The laws of every Christian state, the customs of every Christian society, and the practice of families and individuals as contained in them, are, indeed, always professedly based upon the laws of God, and limited by the precepts of Christ. It is not, however, the outline but the filling in that determines the character: it is not the letter, but the interpretation that fixes the meaning, and gives emphasis to the sense: so it is with the complex social state of a Christian people. The laws of Christian faith are all there, but so glossed and paraphrased, so interlined by commentaries and lowered by adjustments, that it is no longer the Church warring its way through the world, but the world playing the Christian in a masque. This, then, is the world which in our baptism we renounced. It was no remote or imaginary

notion, but a present and active reality: that very same principle of original evil which, in all ages, under all shapes, in all places, has issued in lust, pride, covetousness, vainglory. It surrounds us in the visible Church now as it surrounded the apostles in the Holy City of old. It cleaves to all things about us. It is in all places of concourse, in all business, in all pleasures, in all assemblies and spectacles, in all homes, in all the circumstances of our personal life. We are not called to separate ourselves from any outward system, as they were, but to be inwardly as estranged from the evil that cleaves to the system around us, as if we were not of it. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Let us, then, lay deeply to heart this great truth, that our only safety is in being inwardly dead to the love and fear of the world. Let us go boldly to all lawful work, even though it be in the midst of it; for in that God will keep us pure. However secular our toil may be, whether in trading, or tilling the ground, or in the administration of law, or in the government and service of Christian states, in all these, when God leads us, He will be our shield, and we shall be kept spotless. Only let us watch against craving, or lusting, or hungering after the honours, gifts, and

gains of life. The desire of these things, though we be never corrupted by attaining them, will turn all our work to snares, and make our very duties to be perilous. He that loves these things is to be bought, and has his price, and all men know it; and even the world despises while it buys him for its own. Let us be on our guard against that basest of all idolatry, the worship of wealth, or rank, or numbers; and against that most hateful of all intoxication, the love of popular applause, and the admiration of men that shall die. The favour of the world is no sign of the saints. The cross is their portion. The voice of the many is no test of truth, nor warrant of right, nor rule of duty. Truth and right, and a pure conscience, have been ever with the few. "Many are called, but few are chosen." So it ever has been and shall be. Let us, therefore, pray God for strength to do our work in the world without fear, but to find our rest in Him. Let us not think ourselves safe in a fancied separation from society around us: we cannot escape it any more than the light of day. Nevertheless, let us at least stand aloof from it all we may. Work in the world we needs must; but we need not to feast and revel, to accept its gifts, nor go wondering after its greatness. Let us not take license to taste or to possess all its lawful things, for

"all things are not expedient," "all things edify not." The world has too much craft to thrust upon us at first the offer of forbidden things. Soft things and fair, things harmless and without blame, come first and smooth the way for more subtil allurements. There is but one safeguard for Christ's servants; to be like Him in whom the prince of this world in the hour of temptation had nothing he could make his own. Our safety is not so much *where* as *what* we are.

SERMON XIV.

ON MIXING IN THE WORLD, AND ITS SAFEGUARDS.

St. Matt. xi. 18, 19.

"John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

There is a remarkable contrast between the examples of St. John Baptist and of our Lord. St. Luke tells us of St. John, that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel:" but of our Lord he says, that He went down "to Nazareth, and was subject" to the Blessed Virgin and Joseph, and that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."[1] There was a difference in them even from childhood. John lived apart from men, a severe, ascetic life, in hardship and solitude. Jesus dwelt in a house, among

[1] St. Luke i. 80; ii. 52.

the habitations, trades, and cares of men: for thirty years His was a life such as ours, in all outward things unnoticed and commonplace. And so they both grew up; and in full manhood they came forth, the one a preacher of repentance in the wilderness, having "his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey."[1] The other a preacher of repentance in the world, sitting at meat in the houses of Pharisees and Scribes, and at the table of Levi and Zaccheus the publicans; going, when bidden, even to marriage-feasts, mixing in life, and seeming to partake of the habits and courtesies of men. In a word, John lived out of the world, and our Lord lived in it. And that is the truth which His enemies distorted against Him. "John came neither eating nor drinking:" he was severe, mortified, unbending, isolated; and they cast him out as a demoniac, saying, "He hath a devil." "The Son of man came eating and drinking:" pitiful, tender, compassionate, stooping to the weakness and burdens of common life; and they reviled Him as lax, self-indulgent, and dissolute, "a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans," and a partaker in the revelling of sinners.

Now, of the many subjects naturally arising out

[1] St. Matt. iii. 4.

of these words, there is one to which we shall do well to confine our attention: I mean, the lawfulness of intercourse with the world, and the limitations within which it should be restrained. This is a very difficult question in practice, and often involves painful doubts and misgivings. We hear it much talked of, and by some in a very confident and sweeping way; which, however, for the most part, turns out to be only words after all. Nevertheless, there is a grave matter of Christian duty here at stake; and it is of great moment that we should come both to some clear understanding of it, and to some fixed and tenable principles on which to determine our own conduct. It is not to be denied, that our Lord's example, as contrasted with that of St. John, does warrant, as a general principle, our entering into the world. But there are some points to be considered which will reduce the apparent breadth of that warrant to a much narrower measure.

We must remember, then, first of all, why He did so. It was not for His own sake, or for any of those motives and inducements which it would be an irreverence even to speak of. He went for the sake of others; He was "come to seek and to save that which was lost:"[1] as He told Zaccheus, giving the reason of His making Himself his guest. That day salvation was come to the publican's house.[2]

[1] St. Luke xix. 10. [2] ver. 9.

For the same cause, He laid Himself open to the reproach, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;" and suffered also the woman which was a sinner to wash his feet with her tears. It was, therefore, plainly in the discharge of His ministry of salvation that He mixed at large among all men. The world was the field of His toil; it was the wilderness where His lost sheep were scattered abroad, and He therefore went out into the world to seek them.

And we must not forget Who He was that so adventured Himself: it was He who had overcome the tempter in the wilderness; the same in whom, when the prince of this world came to Him, he had no share nor title. It was safe for Him who was without sin to pass to and fro through all perils of contamination. He could no more be sullied than the light of day. Perhaps it was for this reason that, while prophets and seers, even to John, the greatest of all, had lived apart in watchfulness and mortification, our blessed Lord mixed among men, entered their homes, sat at their tables, and partook of their common habits, their food, and feasts, and social life.

These two considerations, however, while they remind us that both His work and His spotless sanctity made laws for Him which are not necessarily laws for us, do not take away the force of His

conduct as a general rule to guide us in the same subject. After separating all differences, His is still our example. Let us see, therefore, how far it will warrant us.

1. First of all, then, it will not only clearly warrant, but actually enjoin upon us to mix in the world, so far as the calling or work of our life requires. And this must be determined for each one of us by a multitude of details; such as, our condition by birth, education, fortune, profession, outward relations of kindred, neighbourhood, charity, and the like. Every body has his place in the world, and that place has its duties, charges, and character. We must be in a great measure guided by these. For instance, high birth, or the possession of great wealth, forces people into a sphere of life which has a multitude of very extensive relations. It is their duty to fulfil the obligations thereby laid on them. Princes must be surrounded by their courts; high-born and wealthy men keep large houses, and have many guests and numerous entertainments. There need be no worldliness in all this. It may be, indeed, little better than worldly ostentation; and it may feed and kindle all manner of worldly lusts: but it need not do so. Like all things, it is capable of perversion; but in itself it is only the natural sphere of the princes and great men of this world.

It is, however, a very different matter, when men of humbler birth and less fortunes either strive to gain entrance to the ranks of those that are above them, or strain to be their equals. There is a proportion in all the dispensations of Providence: every man has his own range and limit, within which he is safe; and all things may be lawful and sanctified by the word of God and prayer. The administration of property, and the management of estates, necessarily mixes men up with the world. So, much more, do professions and employments: statesmen, lawyers, soldiers, physicians, merchants, tradesmen of every sort, are compelled to meet and deliberate, to barter and consult, to act in common, to combine for worldly objects, without knowledge of each other's character—often with the full knowledge of facts which make them desirous of having no more intercourse with each other than they can help. Now it is obvious that all this is lawful and necessary; that it is even inevitable; that, as St. Paul says, to escape it, "we must needs go out of the world."[1] We may be compelled to meet very bad men, and infidels, and even heathens, and to transact with them such things as "maintain the state of the world." And all this is plainly not only allowed, but imposed on us by the providence

[1] 1 Cor. v. 10.

of God, which has determined the conditions on which all these things depend; such as our birth, station, fortune, calling, relations in life. In so mixing in the world, we are carrying out the work which is set us to do; just as our blessed Lord, for the fulfilment of His work, went wheresoever it could be done.

What has been said of those whose duties are simply of a secular kind applies even more strongly to those who bear sacred offices. They are bound, in faithfulness to their commission, to mix even among the worst of men; not, indeed, as companions, but as instructors, reprovers, and guides.

There are, however, multitudes with whom the pastors of the Church are compelled to mix in an ordinary way, and to watch their opportunities of usefulness. To them the example of our Lord is a direct precedent. The courtesies and kindly offices of life they are under a sort of necessity to accept, that they may share the joys and sorrows of other men, and by their sympathy gain a hearing when they speak in their Master's name.

Thus far, then, is clear: It is not so much in the point of necessary work as in the matter of unnecessary society with the world, that the difficulty arises. And yet it will be found, that the limit of our common intercourse with people is

very much regulated by the facts of our providential lot. Our Lord has sanctioned a marriage-feast by His own presence; and that will shew that feasting is not unlawful in itself. There is a "gladness and singleness of heart"[1] in eating our bread, which is a duty. Sadness and sullenness are not the gifts of the Spirit; but thankful tempers, cheerful giving, mutual joy, music and dancing and the fatted calf: these things belong to the new creation, in which once more "every creature of God is good." Therefore we may fairly say, that such seasonable and measured participation of God's good gifts, and of the enjoyments naturally arising out of the relations which kindred, or neighbourhood, or friendship involves, is lawful and good, and capable of the Divine presence and benediction. But this nobody disputes—nobody, that is, whose disputation it is profitable to hear. The true difficulty lies in so limiting these things in their extent, and so chastening their character, as to preserve them from being turned into occasions of temptation, and into hindrances to the spiritual life.

2. Our Lord's example, then, suggests to us, farther, that we ought to measure our intercourse with the world by what is safe for ourselves. It is perfectly certain, that the attraction and opera-

[1] Acts ii. 46.

tion of the world upon the mind of most persons is highly injurious. It first hinders the work of their sanctification, and next changes their tone of mind into its own temper and spirit. This is what St. Paul means when he warns the Romans, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."[1]

Here is the peculiar danger. All things about us are charged with some measure of the world's evil and power. No lines can be drawn round the infected quarters. They have neither beginning nor ending; no limit or boundary. The whole visible Church is affected by it; whole nations, states, and households. The evil is continuous, all-pervading, ubiquitous. If we would escape the world, we must needs go out of the world: nothing less than this will do it. And this shews the impossibility of that which some excellent persons, with the best intentions, have endeavoured to do: I mean, to draw peremptory lines between their households and "the world." They might as well draw a line between themselves and the race of mankind; for, draw it where they will, they do but make a distinction without a difference; and moreover, they shut out of their precinct some of the holiest saints, and shut into it some who are the very worshippers of the world.

[1] Rom. xii. 2.

And the ill effects of this mistake are manifold. It savours much of rash judgment, self-preference, and separation; and it fosters a dangerous spirit of security, making people think that within their circle they are safe, and that this safety consists in outward lines of separation, instead of an inward grace of watchfulness and purity of heart. It is remarkable how, in families which have isolated themselves from the healthy unconscious action of open intercourse with others, evils of the strangest and most unlooked for kind have unfolded themselves. It is with the spiritual as it is with the natural life; a false principle of sustenance or of action, once admitted, works out the most unwholesome and morbid effects. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the children of persons of much real piety have not seldom turned out sinful or unsatisfactory. They have been brought up in a state of artificial separation from the world, without the real discipline of the inward character, which nothing but probation, or a truly devout life, seems to bestow.

Now from all this it is evident, that the danger of mixing with the world is very great; and that we have need, not only to be afraid of the positive evils spread throughout the common intercourse of life, and especially in relaxations, feasts, entertainments, with their exciting and en-

snaring pleasures; but also to be afraid of ourselves. The more unlike we are to our Lord, the less safe is it for us to venture abroad; the more conscious we are that we are vividly susceptible of temptations, easily elated, or blinded, or led away, and that nothing but a strong inward principle of self-mortification can preserve us, the more we are bound to withdraw ourselves from the world, as from a scene of temptation, and a source of peculiar danger. Now it is certain that we shall be safe from the ill effect of the world just in the measure in which we are unwilling to mix in it; and that as we incline to it, the more susceptible we are of its contagion. If we do not believe it to be tempting and dangerous, we shall be sure to fall; if we do not go into it with shrinking and reluctance, we are certainly in peril. Thus much is evident already, that the god of this world has gone far to blind our minds to the reality of his presence and his wiles; that we must be in a state of no little hardihood, self-reliance, or insensibility. And in such a temper, all intercourse with the world must be perilous. This is universally true, whether our contact with the world be for business or for pleasure; whether we be laymen or clergymen; whether it be public or private intercourse. Things in themselves lawful and safe become inevitable temptations to men who do not

know their liability to be tempted in that particular form. The motives on which we go into the world, and the aims we set before us, will be no sufficient security. Statesmen who have thrown themselves, in pure patriotism, into the struggle of public life, often end in faction and partisanship. Even men in holy orders, who give themselves to a just and seasonable line of public action for the service of the Church, not seldom end in ambition and secularity; and others, who go into private society on the theory of promoting their influence for good, often grow careless and indevout, and adopt, as a settled habit, the very tone to which they yielded for a time with a view to raising it. And if these things happen to guides of souls, in the path of supposed or of real duty, what may we not fear for those who mix in the world only for pleasure? Can any thing be more frivolous and impertinent than the conversation which even wiser men sometimes endure to hear and to partake of? If they would but confess the truth, would they not acknowledge that the greater part of their worldly visiting and mutual entertainment leaves them farther from God than they were when they entered upon it? Can they not trace the effect of the world on all their private devotions? Do they not find themselves troubled in their prayers by a multitude of thoughts? Is

not the temptation to distraction and weariness in prayer greatly increased?

And what does all this prove, but that such intercourse is not safe for them; that they are being "conformed to this world;" that the truth of their character to its own convictions and to itself is being frittered away; that they more readily catch the tone of those they live with, and adopt their system of judging and speaking, instead of impressing their own convictions on others, or even preserving their own consistency? To take one instance, of which this naturally reminds us: how unspeakably difficult is the government of the tongue; and how awful a fact it is to reflect upon, that every word we speak is an expression of the posture or inclination of the undying spirit that is in us; that every such inclination of the spirit God weighs in a balance; and that we are swayed by a thousand daily temptations to speak at random, or in haste, or in excessive terms, outrunning the truth of our hearts; and that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."[1] There is no stimulus to the tongue so great as intercourse with the world: men must talk, that they may not seem morose, foolish, contemptuous, or self-important. And yet what are

[1] St. Matt. xii. 36.

the laws and conditions on which the world will allow a man to talk, but that he will adopt its own phrases, views, maxims, and freedom of speech? For those who would mix in the world with safety there is needed just the reverse of the very gifts which make men the world's favourites: namely, gifts of caution, retirement, and silence. In fact, they mix in it with least peril who are distinguished either for wanting or for concealing the facilities and endowments which the world most covets and cherishes. One principal rule by which to measure what is safe for us is, a thorough knowledge of our own infirmities—of the frailties of our character. And this, after all, is the true criterion of what is expedient for us. I say this, because it seems impossible to enter now into the particulars of this or that form of worldly amusement. For the most part, the entertainments and usages of the world shade off into each other with such graduated tints, that it is not possible in many cases to draw a line. Some things, indeed, are in their tone and effects, in the system by which they are supported, and in the consequences they produce, so plainly and undisguisedly dangerous, that there can be no hesitation in naming them. For instance, the whole system of theatres is such, that I do not see how any one can go to them with safety. No special pleading about their great

moral lessons, and elevated heroic or national character, and the like, will avail to save them from a simple and direct condemnation, as one of the most subtil, complex, and wide-spreading snares of the world. Having said this, it is perhaps best to add no more than, that occasions and acts of public concourse, in which the reserve of private life is relaxed, are dangerous to the simplicity and purity of the mind; and that the entertainments and feastings of private life, where luxury, indiscriminate acquaintance, display of personal appearance or gifts, are admitted, are both dangerous and hurtful.

Thus much has been said by way of general principles and suggestions. All that can be done farther is, to give some particular precepts, which will serve as safeguards to counteract the influence of the world, where it cannot be avoided. When it can be, the wisest and happiest course for those that desire, in purity of heart, to see God, is, to withdraw themselves altogether from paths which need the force of so many precepts to make them at best only comparatively safe.

1. The first rule, then, to be laid down is this: that we take no lower standard of life than the example of our blessed Lord. Nothing but this will set before our conscience a clear definite view of the true end of our Christian profession, which is plainly nothing less than to be made like, in life

and spirit, to the holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ. At our regeneration we received a gift of the Holy Ghost, the grace of a heavenly nature; we were made inwardly capable of attaining to the sinless perfection of our Master. Not, indeed, in this life; but the dispositions, affections, inclinations of soul, which shall issue hereafter in that perfection, must be trained and nurtured in us throughout the whole course of this earthly life. When shall we bear in mind this plain truth, that the future perfection of the saints is not a translation from one state or disposition of soul into another, diverse from the former; but the carrying out, and as it were the blossom and the fruitage of one and the same principle of spiritual life, which, through their whole career on earth, has been growing with an even strength, putting itself forth in the beginnings and promise of perfection, reaching upward with stedfast aspirations after perfect holiness? If we forget this, we shall understand nothing,—our whole life will be a confusion, our whole probation a perplexity; we shall be imposed on by false judgments, unsound examples, misleading principles of action. We shall think that the sum of religion is, what is called, to do our duty in the world—that is, to be outwardly blameless according to the letter of the second table of the law; to be honest traders, industrious students, hard-work-

ing labourers, kind parents, good-hearted friends. Truth, a forgiving disposition, benevolence, general good-will, a kind temper, a moderate and occasional indulgence in worldly amusements, a decent attendance on religious worship, and regularity in household morals and habits, make up the Christianity of most people. And so far as it goes, nothing may be said against it. But tried by the life and mind of Christ, by the realities of holiness and of fellowship with God, by the humiliation and mystery of the cross, which are "the marks of the Lord Jesus," how defective, dim-sighted, unenergetic, and relaxed it must appear! The fact is, that the great multitude of those who live in the world have little perception of the intense and searching spirituality of the life of Christ, which their regeneration binds them to imitate. And therefore the life of most is as vague, pointless, and unmeaning as the reasoning of men who do not know what it is they are going to prove. By this we may chiefly account for the infinite variety of imperfect characters, which have something of true Christianity about them, but are marred, stunted, and contracted. Of course, want of energy and perseverance will produce many of the same results; but in a majority of cases, really well-disposed people go through life with a low, cold, heartless notion of our Lord's example.

They can see the exterior perfection of His life, as measured by the second table of the law; but the motives even of that perfection, much more the whole interior life which is related to the love and worship of God, they simply cannot perceive. It is too high, inward, and deep, for their spiritual senses, which are "exercised" to discern the broader and more sensible features of Christian duty, but cannot distinguish the characters and outlines of God's kingdom as it is impressed upon the affections, thoughts, and motions of our spiritual being. How, then, is it to be wondered at, if they see no inconsistency between habits of free intercourse with society and a life of religion? There is, indeed, no inconsistency with a life of their religion. It has nothing which is at variance with self-indulgence, and a relaxed tone of conversation. Days spent in visiting, and evenings in amusements, leave no effects which are traceable in their morning and evening prayers; because those prayers have been long said with just so much of fervour and attention as is compatible with their habitual way of living: they are therefore no index. They would judge very differently, if they could once rightly perceive the purity, gentleness, meekness, deadness to the world, denial of self, subjugation of will, vivid zeal for the salvation of the elect and for the glory of God, which were in our blessed

Lord. If they could understand, for instance, the meaning of one such word as "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart;" or, "I am not of this world;" they would see all things as if the light of the sun had waxed "sevenfold, as the light of seven days." All the goings on of life—its eating and drinking, planting and building, its buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage—would be seen as they will be in the day of the Son of man. The snares and perils of life and ease, of wealth and pleasure, of business and refinement; the perilous entanglements and depressing influence even of common life; the false maxims and illusions of mankind, and the secret atheism of the world, would all be seen as by an intuition of the spirit. They would then see that the spirit of the world is the very antagonist of the mind of Christ; that none could dwell in it unsullied by its touch but He alone.

2. And therefore, in the next place, it is plain that we must so shape our way through life as shall most foster and promote our continual advance in attaining to the perfection of our new birth, which is the sanctity of Christ. And what is this but, in other words, to be true to the vows of our baptism? We then bound ourselves to "renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and

glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh;" and promised that we would "neither follow nor be led by them." It is impossible to add strength to this vow; it is unconditional and peremptory, and extends over the whole subject of which we are now speaking. It is no open question for a Christian, whether he shall renounce the world or no: he has renounced it already; he is already bound by a perpetual vow; and all that remains is to fulfil it, or to forswear himself. Now, there can be no doubt that the majority of baptised men fall below the standard of their promise: all do, indeed, in respect to its perfection; but I mean, in respect to the measure of their ability to fulfil it. Some do it deliberately, some unconsciously, some from the power of sin, and some from the weakness of their resolutions; but howsoever various the causes, it is certain that we may divide the visible body of baptised men into two classes: those who do, and those who do not, make the vow of their baptism the rule of their life.

In the first days of the Church, the vow of baptism was made perfect in repentance, poverty, charity, in the fellowship of prayers, and holy communion; the Church was a fold in the midst of the world, encompassed by it, but separate. And yet it retained its inward purity only long enough

to be a type and prophecy of its perfection in heaven. At Philippi, Ephesus, Corinth, and elsewhere, even in St. Paul's day, Christians began to fall apart into the two great classes; so that the apostle had need to lay down precepts and rules, such as those we are now endeavouring to find. To the Corinthians he writes: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a *brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."[1] And again to the Thessalonians: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every *brother* that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."[2] St. Paul here recognises a class of men within the Church, or related to it, with whom the faithful ought to hold no intercourse; and they are either persons excommunicate, or such as, though still suffered to abide in the communion of the Church (for instance, the covetous and disorderly), are living in breach of their baptismal vow. These and

[1] 1 Cor. v. 9-11. [2] 2 Thess. iii. 6

many other passages give us the precept of avoiding the contagion of an ill example, even among those whom the Church has not put under formal censures. The apostle also gives the most detailed counsels for purifying our conversation,[1] for edifying one another,[2] for sanctifying households ;[3] and these give us a farther precept of forming our friendships and relations, both with individuals and with families, on the principle of promoting the entire conversion of our hearts to God. It was, without doubt, from this that persons of a more devout temper, and more kindled with the love of the heavenly kingdom, drew into closer fellowships within the unity of the Church ; whole families, perhaps, such as that of Philip the evangelist, who " had four daughters which did prophesy ;"[4] and " the house of Stephanas," and of Chloe and others, gave themselves to a stricter way of life. We may take these as examples of what is both possible and right for private Christians and households now. There is nothing schismatical in a separation which both preserves all religious unity and makes those that live apart characteristically humble and charitable. It is most certain, that the man who does live by his baptismal vow will find himself much alone in his habits, thoughts, and sympathies. The face

[1] Phil. i. 27.
[2] Rom. xiv. 19.
[3] 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.
[4] Acts xxi. 9

of the visible Church must be very different from what it has been, before holiness can fail to bring an apparent separation. So it is with families: if any household be consecrated to God by peculiar devotion, it will stand out from other families. And yet it dare not do less: the vow of its baptism is on it, and it must thereby measure all things. It must do and leave undone, possess and give away, seek and renounce, enjoy or deny itself, according to this rule. The religion of such a house is not only at the foot of the altar, or in its own hours of devotion; neither does it take cognisance only of certain portions of its daily life; but it is the rule of all its acts, the test of its friendships, the measure of its intercourse. And I do not see what any Christian household or man can do less than this. They are pledged to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling;" to have in them the mind that "was in Christ Jesus," in prayer, love, humiliation, and habitual fellowship with God. And how this is to be attained without abstinence from dangerous and inexpedient things, and from all familiar communication with those whose example, spirit, and habit of life, oppose or retard the work of our sanctification, it is not easy to understand. Where is the reason or consistency in habits of prayer, fasting, and self-discipline, if we do not refuse to

expose ourselves to the levity, inflation, and vanity of the world? Surely all these things feed and excite the sins of the heart, and make miserable havoc in our habits of simplicity, watchfulness, humility, and recollection. We are bound to strengthen and to shelter them against all inroads of unholy influence. And moreover: our vow binds us not only to avoid the desecrating and deteriorating action of society, but to give ourselves up with singleness of aim to the help and guidance of such minds and examples, and to such habits and counsels of spiritual wisdom, as shall most directly promote the unfolding and perfecting of the life of God which is in us.

And now, before I conclude, I will notice one general objection which may be expected to what has been advanced. It will be said, that this is a theory; that it is impracticable; that to adopt it men must go into the wilderness with St. John Baptist; that they must forsake the duties of life, and the interchange of courtesies and kindness, which we are bound to maintain.

In answer to all this, we need do no more than recall the example of our blessed Lord. He lived in the world; His work lay in it; He went to the houses of publicans—He went without fear, because He was perfect. It is absolutely necessary to our safety that we should go with fear, because

we are sinners. Nevertheless, His example will warrant to us the lawfulness of mixing in the world as our duties and obligations require. What has been said ought to teach us these two things: first, to use great and discriminating care in choosing the friends and families with whom we mix, and the occasions and festivities in which we join. This principle of spiritual discernment, foresight, and caution, alone can keep us from serious entanglements, and, it may be, from grievous falls. I know of no lines of outward demarcation, nor any sufficient catalogue, distinguishing worldly from innocent amusements: our safeguard must be in ourselves. And the next thing we should learn is, when we can avoid even such intercourse as is lawful, to do so. "All things to me are lawful, but all things are not expedient. All things to me are lawful, but all things edify not."[1] It is far better to bestow the time which we can rescue from the world in things that will deepen the work of God in our hearts, and perfect our repentance.

Or if we think well to go, let us go with a heart estranged from the fair and smooth things of this perishing world,—from its honours, powers, pleasures, and refinements. None ever graced a marriage-feast as He who knew not the very taste of earthly happiness. None was ever so meek, gen-

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 12.

tle, and benign as He that was alive to God alone. So let us strive to mingle among men—to toil with them, sorrow with them, rejoice with them; to visit their homes, and partake of their hospitality, and not turn even from their days of festival—praying always in secret that we may be sheltered under His last intercession: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are;" "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."[1]

[1] St. John xvii. 11, 15, 16.

SERMON XV.

POVERTY A HOLY STATE.

2 Cor. viii. 9.

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

St. Paul is here stirring up the Corinthians to give alms to the poor saints, by the voluntary poverty of our Lord. He tells them of the Macedonians, who, in the spirit of His example, made large offerings out of their "deep poverty;" and says that they "first gave their own selves to the Lord," and, with themselves, all that they had to His service. He then says, "Ye know the grace," the freeness and largeness of the charity of Christ, who, "though He was rich," in His eternal kingdom, in the bliss of His Father, "yet for your sakes He became poor;" stripped Himself of His heavenly state, laid aside His glory, "made Himself of no reputation;" was made man, hungered,

thirsted; was weary, wandered without a place where to lay His head; suffered all shame, hardship, pain, and death; that through this, His poverty of all things heavenly and earthly, ye, in the remission of sins, the cleansing of the soul, the grace of adoption, and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, "might be rich."

Some perhaps might have expected that, at the coming of the Son of God into the world, He would have assumed the power and disposal of all things by which the world is maintained and governed; that is to say, that He would have carried on openly, and by a visible disposal, the divine administration of worldly affairs, as He ever does in secret; that His providence would have been manifested in His person. Of course, no one would expect that He should have affected earthly state or greatness: the very thought can hardly be expressed without a sin. It seems almost like the suggestion of Satan when he shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And yet, we might have expected Him to be openly greater than all powers of the earth; to have made them acknowledge Him, and yield, as the winds and the waves did, to the power of His word. But, on the contrary, no man was ever lower in the world than He—more outcast, destitute, weak, and forsaken; none, perhaps, ever hungered oftener, or

thirsted more, or wandered so wearily; was so banished, not from kings' palaces, and princes' courts, and the houses of great men, and the company of the soft, high, rich, and noble, but from home and hearth, and from the shelter and charities of life. Surely as the world had never seen before an example of such perfect holiness, so it had never seen such perfect and willing poverty. In the Gospels we read of His passing whole nights on the mountain, and in the fourth watch upon the sea. Once we read that He went "unto Bethany, and lodged there,"[1] in the house of a friend, the stranger's home. His life He began and ended as a wanderer, from the stable to the sepulchre. So true to the letter were His words, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Of His own He had little but His raiment; even His daily food, they that followed Him "ministered to Him of their substance."[2]

Now this absolute destitution of all things needful for our bodily life was, without doubt, a designed feature in His humiliation. When He took upon Him our manhood, He took it with all its capacities of suffering; and He placed Himself, so to speak, in that position in the life of man where all the sorrows which came with sin into

[1] St. Matt. xxi. 17. [2] St. Luke viii. 3.

the world were surest to light upon Him. Weariness, toil, cold, hunger, loneliness, and shame, which are the portion of the destitute, He chose as His lot, and tasted in their sharpest forms. And He thereby learned to sympathise with the universal sufferings of humanity. He became a Saviour, not of any class or condition of men, but of all mankind: of man as man in his fallen, suffering, sorrowing humanity. It is this that gives to the poor a peculiar share in the sympathy of Christ. No man ever was so burdened, naked, desolate, but He was more so. His example has consecrated the state of poverty, and converted it into a discipline, and bestowed upon it a special grace. It is this that we will now consider.

1. First of all, the poverty of Christ is intended as an example to all men. To His earliest followers He gave the precept of poverty; He made it binding on them; He made it even the condition of entering His service and His kingdom. "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven;" or, as St. Mark records the same command, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Or again, "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the

heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth."[1] Peter "said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or mother, or sisters, or father, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."[2] "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."[3] And this precept was obeyed to the very letter by His first followers, and by the apostolic Church. They sold their houses and lands, and laid the money at the apostles' feet. No man "called any thing that he possessed his own;" "they had all things common."[4] Now, this community of goods was a close imitation of our Lord's example—a prolonging of the fellowship which He had with them and they with Him, after His departure. Poverty, toil, and a common life, were the daily bonds of their society with Him; and they

[1] St. Matt. xix. 21; St. Mark x. 21; St. Luke xii. 33.

[2] St. Matt. xix. 27-29.

[3] St. Luke xiv. 33.

[4] Acts iv. 32.

chose to live on as He had left them, still realising His presence "who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor."

Out of this common life came the fixed endowments of the Church. First, the bishop and his clergy, and the poor of Christ, lived of one stock and revenue, as it were at one table, at which the spiritual father presided in Christ's stead. Afterwards, when the Church had peace, and, in God's good providence, was permitted to make itself fixed homes and certain dwelling-places, the necessity which lay on them by reason of the then "present distress" ceased; the members of the Church were not compelled to give up lands and houses; they had no longer to forsake their homes, to go out from all that they possessed; and the poor of Christ, the widows and orphans, had a full and certain living, "in peaceable habitations, and in quiet resting-places." That which was a precept of necessity, became a counsel of perfection. It was a fuller and closer imitation of the life of Christ for those who, by the providence of God, were permitted to forsake all for the love of their heavenly Master. And there have been many, in all ages of the Church, who have willingly made themselves poor for Christ's sake, that through their poverty and labour of love the elect might be made rich in God's kingdom. Some forsook all that they pos-

sessed at once, and gave all their worldly goods at one offering to the service of the Church, or to the poor of Christ, and thenceforward lived by the labour of their hands or by the work of the gospel. Others retained their inheritance and their right to the goods that they possessed, but converted the enjoyment of them into a stewardship. They lived of them; but after taking for their own use just so much as their bare need required, they gave the rest, by a perpetual and daily oblation, in alms to the poor. It may perhaps be said, that the state of the Church at this day, in its intermixture with the Christian world, with its political and social relations, is such as to make it neither right nor possible for most, if for any, to give up all that they possess, and to throw themselves into a state of poverty and dependence. Perhaps it may be; though the question admits of more discussion than people think; and we may refer to it hereafter. For the present it is enough to say, that, at all events, the other principle, of holding the wealth of this world as a stewardship, as if the title were in God and the inheritance in the poor, is altogether possible, and easy to many, if only they have charity and devotion to adopt it. I do not say that it is possible for all men; far from it: rather that it is, like Holy Orders, a high privilege to which a man is called by God Himself. It is plain that they

who have a household and family depending on them must first maintain them with all needful provisions. This is the stewardship of most men, to provide for their own, and is a kind of poverty in itself. But there are those who either have a larger income than they and their families require, or have none at all depending on them. In both these cases it is quite possible so to pitch the scale of household and personal expenses, as to leave a portion of their yearly income to be administered as a stewardship. I do not undertake to say what proportion ought to be so devoted. The divine wisdom has prescribed a tenth at least. St. Paul has given us a rule which cannot be gainsayed: "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." And the reason on which he grounds it is very awful, from its severe and simple truth: "for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." The needs of an immortal being are very real, narrow, and few. If we would but measure our needs by the measure of a death-bed, or the necessities of a holy state, we should look with amazement and fear on the excessive and artificial habits of our daily life. Things we now look on as necessary would be seen to be wanton indulgences of self; our wants would be for the most part discovered to be fictitious, and our permitted indulgences to be a luxurious and dangerous softness.

It would seem, then, that the rules by which any one who has the care of a family committed to him should proceed are these: First, to provide for those depending on him whatsoever is really needed for proper food, raiment, and instruction of life; next, for the maintenance of his relations to others among whom the providence of God has cast his lot. We hear much of the duty of maintaining our position in society; and it is a worldly way of expressing what, beyond all doubt, is a truth, namely, that the circumstances of our birth, and the intellectual and moral condition into which we have been brought, are facts determined by the will of God; and as such demand a reverent observance. The whole political and social state of mankind is the work and ordinance of God; and therefore all the parts of it are the subjects of His disposition, and all parts and members of it have their functions, duties, and responsibilities, which we may not without strong and special reasons neglect or withdraw from. It cannot be doubted, therefore, that we are bound, for the sake of others to whom we are thus related, to bear our part in the burden of society. But nothing that has been said warrants our going beyond the strictest interpretation of what that position absolutely demands. And they that will fairly, and without secret inclinations to a lax

judgment, ascertain what their position in life really demands, will find its exactions incredibly small. Again: it is undoubtedly the duty of parents to lay by such a measure of their means of life as a discreet foresight, checked by an honest trust in the providence of God, will prescribe. But this will not warrant hoarding, or carefulness to increase in wealth, or to leave riches to heirs and successors. It warrants no more than such a care for others as prudence, I may say honesty, prescribes for ourselves. Now these principles may be fairly and safely laid down for the direction of those that desire, in the midst of worldly cares and burdens, to imitate at least the spirit of our Lord's poverty. If, after satisfying these obligations, there remain any yearly income, it may be administered as the patrimony of the poor. And they that possess it may, to an extent and in matters which it is impossible to describe, follow the poverty of Christ by personal self-denials. It has pleased God to ordain the lot of many of His most perfect servants in the midst of the riches, state, and glitter of the world; to charge them with great possessions, vast revenues, large dominions, high offices, and a numerous retinue. Sometimes they have been set on thrones, or detained in courts and councils of state; or they have had great lordships, and the responsibility of a spiritual

rule, and their whole life and outward condition has been full of power, and dignity, and worldly encumbrances. And yet in the midst of all, by secret self-denial and self-renouncement, they have lived a life of personal poverty in the presence of luxury and splendour. I put these as extreme cases; for what was possible in them must be easy to us. If they whose outward state was the very antagonist and contradiction of our Lord's poverty, could in secret make themselves poor like Him, then much more may we all, whose outward state is moderate and easy to control. All that is needed is energy of will and perseverance in maintaining the practice of personal self-denial. No one can say how far he may be able to advance in the spirit of poverty till he has tried it. A mind truly bent on following our Lord in this part of His humiliation will discover seasons, and times, and opportunities of exercising it, which it is impossible to set down. If one were to do so, it would lose its grace and dignity, and seem trivial, unmeaning, commonplace, unworthy of the greatness and sanctity of the subject. It must be left, therefore, to the conscience of each person. And so it may be dismissed; once more saying, that what has been here thrown out is practicable for all persons, in whatsoever rank of life, even for the very highest in this earthly state; for the

most burdened with worldly relations and offices; for the most encumbered with household cares, and the like; because, after all, it depends chiefly upon the secret mortification and impoverishment of the heart, which may be perfect, even when the natural expressions of it in act and deed are not permitted.

But there are others, as has been said, on whom the providence of God has laid no greater charge than to provide the little which is necessary for their own subsistence; and they may much more closely approach the example of our Divine Master. Suppose a man to receive an inheritance greater than his personal needs; what hinders his making the poor to be usufructuaries of his estate, and himself the steward, whose recompense is his own food and raiment? He need do no violence to the context of society; he may leave all things in their natural channel. The legal securities of his possessions would remain untouched. They might be bequeathed to his lawful heirs; only he would forsake his life-interest for the love of Christ, and to follow the example of His holy poverty. Perhaps the very suggestion may be thought almost fanatical, or at least to be a treason against the prerogatives of a refined selfishness by which the world is ruled. Nevertheless, there is in it more of reason, reality, sound sense, Christian prudence, than in

the popular theory and practice of ordinary life. It is capable of being demonstrated by a severer and more certain proof than any worldly projects will admit, to be wise, cautious, forecasting, and in the highest degree expedient to the man that adopts it for his rule of life, and even to the world. This is taking the lowest ground. But let us not forget that there are higher reasons which will occur hereafter. Hitherto we have spoken only of those who are rich in this world, because to them the imitation of the poverty of our Lord may seem at first sight impossible. It is hardly necessary to do more than to say, that to those who are actually poor, His example is a singular consolation. It elevates their inevitable condition into an opportunity of following His footsteps in a path which leads to great perfection.

2. Another reason for His choosing so bare and destitute a condition was, that He, by His poverty, might set us an example of deadness to the world. The gifts and allurements of the secular state are among the chief dangers of Christ's servants. There are very few that can resist the offers of wealth, ease, elevation, power, and the like. The world is strangely versatile and seducing, and is at the best a dangerous friend. Prosperity destroys not fools only. There is something peculiarly subtil and persuasive in high station, titles,

and appointments, and in full homes, fair prospects, abundant incomes. What but this does St. John mean by saying, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but are of the world."[1] It was to be the note of Christ's true followers, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."[2] In our baptism we renounced it. And He, foreseeing its peculiar subtilty, and the trial of His Church, especially in the days when the world was to come into its fold, stamped for ever in His own example the visible tokens of perfect deadness to the secular state, by choosing for Himself a life of poverty. "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor." He gave Himself for us, "that He might deliver us from this present evil world."[3] And in His own visible example He shewed openly the work He came to do. He stood out from the world, apart from all its powers, gifts, and greatness. He had no share in it, and it had nothing in Him. In the full tide of life He was as dead to it as upon the Cross. It was simply colourless, tasteless, powerless. He was there to counterwork

[1] 1 St. John ii. 15, 16. [2] St. John xvii. 14.

[3] Gal. i. 4.

the whole mystery of this tempting world, and to abolish all its lures. And this He did first by Himself. He stood aloof from it, disengaged and free to rebuke, warn, condemn, abase it. And such is the condition on which alone we can overcome the world. Just in the measure in which we accept its favours, and consent to be honoured, gifted, enriched by it, we give it hostages or make ourselves its hirelings. I am not speaking of gross worldliness, ambition, and covetousness. They are self-condemned. I mean that far more insidious form of worldliness, in which interest and advancement seem to coincide with the line of duty. Men think they ought to refuse nothing that comes to them: as if all offers were necessarily from God; as if, by indirect means at least, and through the agency of the world, Satan could not in some measure fulfil his words, "all these things will I give thee." Now it is a remarkable fact, that many men to whom the world seems to open itself that they may set themselves in its very heart, in places of the greatest power, influence, popularity, lose their real force in the measure in which they advance into it, and are simply powerless when they are at the highest point of apparent mastery. The world knows with whom it has to do, and lays its ambush for those who in secret are still alive to it. While they seem to be carrying God's

kingdom into the very core of the world, they are only taken in a snare. Their admonitions, reproofs, and rebukes, with how much soever of human emotion and effect, fall very light upon it. The world hires them as eloquent orators to grace a feast-day, or "as one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument," to drive away the vexing spirit, when, in spite of itself, it is disquieted. In the turmoil and onward movement of its affairs, when the blood stirs, and plans are laid deep, and great casts are ventured, for pleasure, or gain, or self-exaltation, the voice of the charmer is drowned, or rudely bid to be still, and he himself cast out. A pitiful lot; full of humiliation and heart-breaking when any deep or noble thought is still in a man! What might not such have been and done, if only they had been dead to the world, had refused its offers, and used no powers but those which God bestowed, or they themselves had wrung by force from the world itself! This is another great lesson set us in the poverty of our Lord: so to die to the world, that it cannot find the price at which to buy our submission. This is the secret of strength and stedfastness: when the prince of this world hath nothing in us, nothing to which he can speak smooth things through the eye, or through the ear; when for us gold has no brightness, and honour is a burden, and high office

wearisome to bear, and the multitude of followers make us long to be forgotten, and the manifold duties of exalted station are irksome to the soul whose single intention is to be united with the presence of God, then we are beginning to learn what it is to be dead to the life of the world. And this temper is an absolute condition to the doing of any great and high service for Christ in His Church. There is a poverty of design, a weakness of purpose, an uncertainty and vacillation about all who still harbour a secret affection for the world. Howsoever high their theories or aspirations, there is some sidelong glance at the opinion, or judgment, or standard of others, which mars the singleness of their aim; some remote interest which pulls them back; some calculation of results, some forecasting of consequences, which make them seldom true to their present position or to themselves. But the man that covets nothing, seeks nothing, looks for nothing, nay, that would refuse and reject the solicitations of the world, unless they bore on them some sure and expressive marks of his Master's hand, is above all worldly power. He is truly independent; out of the reach of hope and fear; self-resolved, and, next under God, lord of his own spirit.

3. And once more: the example of the Son of God was no doubt designed to shew us the relation

between poverty and holiness. The very state of poverty is a wholesome corrective of many subtil and stubborn hindrances of our sanctification. Let us embrace it with gladness. Let us, when the choice is before us, choose it rather than to be rich. In His awful warnings on the danger of riches, our Lord neither meant to say that rich men could not be saved, nor that the abuse of riches alone is dangerous; but that the very possession of them is full of peril. They intoxicate the heart; they raise its pulse above the natural beat, and make the desires of the mind flushed and feverish. Even the blameless and upright among rich men are full of artificial feelings, false sympathies, unreal standards of what is necessary, becoming, and right. Riches take them out of the universal category of man, and train them up in a sickly and unnatural isolation from the real wants, sorrows, sufferings, fears, and hopes of mankind. Certainly they hinder, in a marked degree, the secret habits of humiliation, self-chastisement, and self-affliction, without which no high reach of sanctity is ever attained. How can a man who, without toil, forethought, or faith, lives daily on a full fare, and is warm and well furnished, put himself in the point of sight from which alone the Sermon on the mount or the Passion of our Lord can be fully read? There must be something of antipathy be-

tween states that are so remote, if not opposed. It is not only the pampered and luxurious, but the easy and full, who harbour strange desires, excessive anxieties, irregular wishes, foolish cares. There is something of self-worship, which greatly retards their sanctification, and even hinders their conversion to God. Now, poverty is a very wholesome medicine for all this; sharp, indeed, and rough to the taste, yet full of potent virtues. It is a sort of discipline—the ascetic rule of God's providence. They that are poor are already and unconsciously under a discipline of humility and self-denial. What so chastens the desires of the heart, and restrains them within due bounds and order? what so reduces a man within the limit of his own sphere? How great simplicity and abstinence of mind there is in the poor of the world. A hard life, scanty fare, coarse raiment, plain food, a low-roofed dwelling, are all they have, and the continuance of them all they desire. Surely none stand fairer for Christ's kingdom than they. From what unnumbered temptations, day-dreams, hankerings, schemes, speculations, snares, are they altogether free. Their whole life lies in the well-known precinct of a lonely hamlet, where, from birth to the grave, they dwell in familiar daily converse with the very stones, and trees, and brooks, with simple and true thoughts of life and death,

and the realities of our fallen state. How clear and direct is their insight into the world beyond the grave. How little have they to divide their thoughts with God. How soon they release themselves from life. How simply they die. What are our hurried days and waking nights, but the tyranny of a multitude of thoughts, which are worldly, ambitious, selfish, or needless, empty, and vain? What is it that keeps us perpetually straining, and moiling, and wearing ourselves away, but some desire which is not chastened, some thought of the heart which is not dead to this worldly state? What makes us lament the flight of time, and the changes of the world, but that we are still a part of it, and share its life? What makes us die so hard, but that we leave behind us more treasures than we have laid up in heaven—that our hearts are not there, but here? How much of mercy and meaning does this put into all worldly reverses. The loss of fortune is, as it were, a call to perfection; the appointment of a poor lot in life, or of a precarious livelihood, are tokens of His will to make us share in the likeness of His poverty. Let us bless Him for every degree of approach He permits us to make towards His perfect life. Whether we be in the sacred or secular state, let us use the narrowness of worldly fortunes as a means of chastening our desires, subduing our

thoughts, strengthening our trust in His care for us, and in making ourselves independent of all things but His truth, His Spirit, the laws of His Church, and the hope of His heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XVI.

DEVOTION POSSIBLE IN THE BUSIEST LIFE.

St. Mark vi. 30, 31.

"And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

There is something very cheerless to our minds, in this insight into the life of our Lord. What unceasing toil was His! All day long crowded upon and thronged by the multitude, "coming and going" early and late; and He without home or shelter, and "no leisure so much as to eat." His rest was in prayers and watching under a midnight sky; His secret chamber the wilderness. "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." This was, no doubt, a particular occasion, probably when the Jews were going

up to the Passover ; and yet such seasons came not seldom in His life.

It would seem, indeed, as if our blessed Lord had in all things assumed the most painful lot of which our humanity is capable. He chose for His portion every thing we can endure. And surely in this there is great consolation, and a direct admonition for our guidance. We may take His life, as it is here manifested to us, as an example to those whose lot in this world is labour.

We are apt to think that a busy life is hardly compatible with a life of devotion. And we unconsciously make two rules of holy living ; one for those who are busied in the world, and another for those who are free from the necessity of earning their bread. For instance, we tacitly assume that the poor can do no more than live lives of general religious obedience ; that habits of devotion, or of minute personal discipline, are too refined and remote from them. So again in the case of men who are engaged in traffic and commerce, or in learned professions, or in the administration of law, or the government of the country ; that is, traders, merchants, lawyers, politicians, statesmen, and the like. Whether we are aware of it or no, we are inclined to think that they may take a lower tone in the whole life of religion,

and indulge themselves in freer habits, and aim at a less perfect standard of personal devotion. We seem to allow that attendance at daily prayers in the church, frequent communion, reading of holy Scripture in private, habits of religious meditation, and fasting, are next to impossible for men who lead busy and laborious lives. And they are ready enough to catch at what we allow. It is the very plea they put forward for exemption from the higher precepts and rules of a holy life. Sometimes this is done with no regret, but rather with a tone of perfect contentment: sometimes it is used to justify a thousand omissions of religious duty, and to make neglects appear inevitable; and sometimes, though, alas, but seldom, it is a subject of much disquiet, fear, and sadness.

Let us, then, consider this subject in the light which the example of our Lord throws upon it.

We may learn from His life of toil, that there is nothing in a life of perpetual labour to hinder our attaining to the highest measure of perfection. There was never any one whose life was fuller of endless employments, or more broken by countless interruptions, than His. This may shew us that the most laborious may be the holiest of saints. Indeed, the greatest saints are those who have been most like to their Lord in perpetual labours: as, for instance, the prophets and apostles, the first

converters of nations, pastors in all ages, faithful servants of God in all states and conditions of life.

There are, however, two objections which may be made against this example. One is, that He, being sinless, must needs be independent of the means and conditions on which holiness depends in us, and therefore could suffer no obstruction by the multitude of His employments. The other is, that His work was not secular, but sacred; that it is an example in point for the labours of His pastors in the ministry of the gospel, but not for those whose work and calling lies in the world, in the merchandise, traffic, and turmoil of this earthly life. One answer will be enough for both these objections.

1. It is true that He, being sinless, must needs be beyond the power of the worldly hindrances which obstruct a life of devotion in us. But is there not something really unsound in the idea that any thing which is our *duty* in life can be an obstruction to any other duty? Is it not in effect to say, that two laws of obedience and two obligations of the Divine will can cross each other, and that God can contradict Himself? Surely the truth must be, that whatsoever in our daily life is lawful and right for us to be engaged in, is in itself a part of our obedience to God; a part, that is, of our very religion? How long shall we go

on believing that there is no worship of God but prayers, and psalms, and public litanies, and private acts of devotion? Is not obedience a continual worship, and the life of a holy man a continual prayer? Whatsoever we do, if done "to the glory of God," is true worship. The tillage of the earth, the sweat of the brow, the toils of reason, the labours of the learned, the industry of merchants, the justice of magistrates, the wisdom of lawgivers, all these severally are the work entrusted to each of God; and when done in obedience to Him, are as direct a sacrifice of worship as the praise of our lips and the chants of choirs, solemn processions and the pomp of festivals. So far, then, from our worldly duties being obstructions to a devout life, they are closely and intimately related to the highest law of obedience, and may be made the occasion and expression of a fervent spirit of devotion. What were the public burdens of Moses, or the household cares of Jacob, or the royal offices and charges of David, but occasions of daily obedience to the Divine will? Whensoever, then, we hear people complaining of obstructions and hindrances put by the duties of life in the way of devoting themselves to God, we may be sure they are under some false view or other. They do not look upon their daily work as the task God has set them, and as obedience due to Him; or they

are conscious that in their daily work there is something which is not wholly lawful; or that it is not carried on altogether by lawful means; or they know that they permit it to interfere with the duties of religion; or they do not rightly know what the duties of religion are; or they think devotion to be an occasional state of the mind separate and remote from the work of life, and even opposed to it. Now, people talk in this way as if they really held, with the Manicheans, that this world is the creation of an evil being, and that all things relating to it must needs clash with the holiness of the Supreme God. Let us, then, lay this down as an axiom, that whatsoever be the duties of our lot in life, they are the sphere and field in which God would have us to serve Him. They can obstruct nothing of the hidden life in us, so long as we have a clear sight of God in them, and do them all for His sake. And this answers the second objection. The distinction of secular and sacred is but external; all duties are sacred. Let us not think that there is no serving God except in the direct ministry of His Church. It is true that the pastors of Christ have this great privilege, that all their daily work is visibly and distinctly related to the will of God and to the habit of personal devotion. Our duties and our devotions are almost one and the same act.

And this is a singular and inestimable benefit, for which we must answer with a fearful strictness at the last day. But the pastor and the peasant, the catechist and the sower, the bishop ruling in the Church and the judge sitting in the gate, the saint in his closet and the faithful householder ordering his family, all these are serving their Father in heaven by a simple, direct, and acceptable service. Their circumstances, as we say, in life, that is, the outer world of relations, duties, employments, by which they are encompassed, are the deliberate appointments of God's providence, and may be taken as a revelation in fact of the kind of service He requires of them. It is through these appointments that we are to worship God with the reverence and obedience of our whole heart. A life of devotion does not mean a life of separation from active duties, but the discharge of all offices, high or low, from the most sacred and elevated to the most secular and menial, in a devout spirit.

2. But we may go farther; and say, not only that the duties of life, be they never so toilsome and distracting, are no obstructions to a life of any degree of inward holiness; but that they are even direct means, when rightly used, to promote our sanctification. For what are all our duties, toils, and cares, but the lot which God in His mercy ap-

pointed to man after the fall? "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."[1] It matters not what is the form of our labour, or the condition of our calling in life. The cares of princes, no less than the labours of the herdsman and the tillage of the ground, are all fruits of the same law of toil which God imposed upon Adam when he sinned: and it was hardly so much a curse as a blessing; hardly so much a penalty as a merciful provision. What would have been the career and destiny of man, if, after falling from righteousness and from God, he had been left in the free possession of all created things; if, with a heart corrupt, all the fruitfulness and richness of paradise had still been his earthly portion? Surely Heaven would have sickened at the sight of man: earth would have groaned under the burden of his sloth, lust, and atheism. Is there not mercy in the niggardliness of the earth, and the overcasting of the sky, and the changes of storm, and wind, and cold, and tempest, by which this world chastises our sloth and intemperate desires? If labour were not the lot of sinners, verily Babylon and Nineveh, Sidon and Tyre, Sodom and Gomorrah, would be but faint types of the pride and rebellion of man-

[1] Gen. iii. 19.

kind. Now, in this view we may look upon our calling and work in life as a humiliation, as a token of the fall. In the case of pastors and preachers of the gospel it is manifestly so. The Church itself is a witness that sin has entered into the world. If there were no sin, then there would be no need of a ministry of reconciliation, of sacraments of renewal, of the pastoral rod, or the fold separate from the world. So again in the highest civil employments: what are kings and princes, ministers and statesmen, but witnesses that the government of God has been shaken off, and that men must be governed by the sword? The same truth is still more evident in the professions which are devoted to war, to healing, to litigation; and hardly less in those which relate to the clothing, food, and necessities of this earthly life: the traces of the fall are upon them all. Now, if men would see their daily employments in this light, it would work a wonderful change in the feeling with which they undertake and pursue them: it would hardly be possible for a man to be proud, covetous, or ambitious in the very matter which reminds him that he is a fallen being, and in a condition which is the portion of a sinner. This is a strange reading of all worldly greatness. How will the world bear to hear that all the pomp and splendour of thrones and legislatures, of courts and councils, and all its wealth, its "mer-

chandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men;"[1] that all this is no more than a gorgeous display of its fall from God? This humbling view of our daily work in the world will be very wholesome, in making us go to it as sinners, and in admonishing us to do our duties in humility and patience. In this way it will help to perfect our repentance; it will remind us that, at our best estate in this world, if we compare it with the bliss and rest of paradise, we are as the prodigal, outcast and naked, toiling under a base servitude in a far country. We shall therefore bear our daily task as a deserved and salutary yoke, by which we acknowledge our condition as penitents. The weariness, crosses, disappointments, and vexations, which arise in it; the early hours and late; the crowding and thronging of the multitude; all these are but as the dust, ashes, and sackcloth, of our just humiliation.

3. Another benefit in continual employment is,

[1] Rev. xviii. 12, 13.

that it acts as a great check upon the temptations which beset an unoccupied and disengaged man. If we could reckon up the temptations which have assaulted us in life, we should find by far the greater number have come upon us in seasons of relaxation, when the mind is vacant, wandering, and off its guard. Employment, even of a mechanical sort, much more real toil and active labour, are most beneficial to us. Next to prayer and a life of devotional habits, there is nothing that keeps the heart so pure, and the will so strong and stedfast, as a life of active duty. This is no doubt one peculiar blessing of those who live hard and laborious lives, and accounts, in great measure, for the singular simplicity, straightforwardness, unconsciousness of evil, which is to be found among the labouring poor. Their poverty, and daily intentness of mind upon the pure and simple tillage of the earth, shields them from a thousand assaults of evil, and a whole world of dangerous thoughts, schemes, desires, and designs, which throng upon the idle or unemployed. Compare the open and natural character of a poor man with the complex, suppressed, inward mind of those who live in the world with much time at their disposal, and little or no laborious work. It is like the transparency of a child by the side of a darkened and deteriorated manhood. A lawful

and regular employment, somewhat laborious, and even absorbing (so that it does not estrange a man's mind from God), is a great security against the temptations of the world and of our own hearts. It shuts out the approaches of temptations without number; and keeps the mind in perfect ignorance that such allurements exist in the world. It is the want of some fixed and regular course of duty that makes even good people inconsistent, uncertain, wavering, and sometimes listless, unwary, and infirm. Unsettled thoughts, roving imaginations, idle fancies, vacant hearts, wandering eyes, open ears, busy tongues, are the inseparable companions of a man who has little to do, or no rule and order of daily employment. From all this, steady labour would be his protection. Work is the very salt of our fallen nature, and keeps it from corrupting.

And besides this security against temptation, daily work is a daily discipline. It taxes us in those very habits on which a life of devotion rests; I mean, patience, endurance, self-control. A life of industry is very nearly related to a life of religion; the staple of the character, so to speak, is the same.

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."[1] It is therefore most cer-

[1] St. Luke xvi. 10.

tain, that a life which is full of order, precision, self-denial, is not far from the kingdom of God; of course, I do not mean in men who are tainted by a worldly, covetous, careful spirit. The presence of any evil disposition will make even that which is good to be dangerous. The more laborious a covetous or ambitious man is, so much the worse; so much the more is he estranged from God, and enslaved by the worship of the world and of himself. I am speaking only of the habits in themselves, apart from any particular quality or direction. They are the very same as those of the faithful servant, who traded well with his lord's money, and are therefore capable of being sanctified by an habitual recollection of heart, and by remembrance of the presence of God. And besides this, there is in all continual employment, even in the ministries of faith and charity, a sense of exhaustion and weariness, which is a wholesome memorial of our infirmity. Every day as our strength goes from us, and every night as we lie down to sleep, there is an admonition of our fallen state. We are not as they "that excel in strength," whose living powers of obedience never waste; but one half of our life is spent in repairing the decays of the other half; and our Father in compassion draws a veil of darkness over us, and hides our humiliation, as it were, from heaven and earth.

"Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening;" and then "the night cometh, in which no man can work." Toil and rest are God's ordinance; He has joined them together, and man may not put them asunder. We cannot toil without resting, nor rest without toiling: for that is no rest, but a guilty and dangerous sloth, in which all the powers and energies of the soul are slackened and stupified. We find, therefore, one universal sign of a holy life is habitual work—whether it be spiritual labour or secular is all one. A true Christian abhors idleness and protracted relaxation: he has something which warns him that his work is standing still, and that his own soul needs the discipline of labour to keep it within the rule of obedience; to tame its motions and chasten its desires; and for this, the work of the world may be, in one sense, even a better discipline than that of pastors; for it has in it more of weariness and humiliation, and less of many subtil dangers. They who labour in the world, in its marts, and courts, and treasure-houses, among the press and struggle of contentious and covetous men, if they have any reflection, any aspiration after the unseen rest, will be able to convert their daily business and profession into a wholesome discipline, and to look upon it as a burden which has in it not a little of shame and of the Cross. In this

way hindrances shall turn to helps; and that which others yield to as an obstruction shall to them become a furtherance. It teaches them the emptiness and unrest of the world, and drives them, by a strong counteraction, to the only true rest, which is Jesus Christ.

But nothing that has been said must be thought to imply that a life of employment has not its peculiar difficulties. We need only look at busy men, and see how few are really devout, to satisfy ourselves that there must, after all, be some great dangers attending a life of constant occupation. And that is most true. What I have shewn is this, that it is not labour and business, *as such*, that hinder men from a life of religion; but, on the contrary, that a busy man has many peculiar advantages, and that he may turn his whole employment into a discipline nearly related to religion. But it must be confessed, that few really do so. It may be well, therefore, in conclusion, to notice one or two of the reasons which seem to account for this fact.

1. And, first, it is because men engaged in laborious lives are very liable to get too much absorbed in things out of themselves. Their work, aims, projects, professions, and the like, grow to an unnatural importance, and encroach upon all their thoughts. Also, they become fond of the

mere energy and habit of business. Dexterity, skill, foresight, calculation, become things pleasant in themselves, and are enjoyed for their own sakes. The effect of this is, that the first and governing rule of their thoughts and habits, and of the times and arrangements of every day, is their work. Their prayers in private are regulated as to length with a view to punctuality in business. The order of their household also is determined by it. The public offices of the Church, except on Sunday, are given up as impossible; frequent communion is avoided, as needing more habitual preparation than they can give to it. As a theory, they admit that the life of a Christian, as we find it in the Bible, —devout, thoughtful, collected, estranged from the world,—is the standard at which they ought to aim; but in practice, the example of others engaged in the same business or calling as themselves is the measure of their Christianity. As a fact, religion does not govern their life; it is only one of the secondary forces which help to determine their character.

2. Another effect, which is a consequence of the last, is, that they become forgetful of their own interior life. They live out of themselves. Their objects, aims, impulses, measures, rules, are without. They grow mechanical and external. This is sadly evident in many kinds of men, as, for ex-

ample, among such of the hard-working poor as are not under the power of religion; and it is from these instances that men draw hasty and false conclusions. Some of them do, indeed, live a sort of animal life, toiling, feeding, and resting, as if they were created only to carry burdens, and to break up the soil of the earth. In such cases, it is difficult to overstate their insensibility and unconsciousness of all that makes up the hidden life of the soul. Acts of self-examination, reflection, religious meditation, and even prayer, are so strange and remote from their habitual thoughts and employments, that it is with the greatest difficulty they can be brought so much as to understand what these things mean. Theirs is a life of sight and sense, a life of the body rather than of the soul. But it is not only among the poor that such are to be found. It is still more true of those who live in the midst of ambitious contests or speculations of gain; with this difference, that there is a high excitement of the intellectual powers, and a refined hardness of the heart, which make them even more impenetrable to the power of truth, and still more estranged from the discipline of their inner life. That which the world praises as enthusiasm in their profession, self-forgetfulness, devotedness to great aims, and the like, does really in most cases contain an utter neglect

of their own true immortality. It is one of the saddest thoughts, that some of the greatest men of the world, as lawgivers, orators, leaders, statesmen, have lived and died, if not in open breach of the Divine laws, at least in an utter insensibility to their own spiritual being, its probation, and its destiny.

3. And lastly, this self-neglect leads directly to an entire forgetfulness of God. Indeed, it includes it. The two go together and involve each other. People, by losing sight of their own hidden life, soon lose also all perception of things unseen, and of the Divine presence as manifested in this world. It is this that makes the whole doctrine, ritual, and discipline of the Catholic Church, the whole mystery of sacraments and of the communion of saints, seem not only a perplexed and untenable theory, but to be a mere dream or vision of superstitious minds. To minds that live for this world, and for what may be seen, touched, and handled, there must be a provoking unreality about the whole theory of the Church. The very word 'mystical' is a word of reproach in the mouth of the world. All hidden agencies which are not calculable by science, all preternatural causes which cannot be reduced to a formula, or explained by processes of reason, all precepts and rules of which the direct bearing and consequence is not perceptible, are, to men trained in the service of the

world, an imagination and a delusion. Now this does of course destroy all habits of devotion. There can be no life of prayer and communion with the unseen Presence, where the very Presence itself, if not doubted, is clouded and banished from our habitual consciousness. If the unseen world withdraw itself, and all its glorious realities become pale and dubious, how can our hearts open and yearn towards it? And such is the state to which the business, traffic, and work of this world may bring us.

But if there be any truth in what has been said before, the blame of this must be wholly our own. We can never come to this state, unless we allow the world to sap and to seduce our hearts away from us. What should have been the token of our humiliation, the chastisement of our spirits, and the discipline of our life, we have converted into a temptation and a snare; a burden to oppress our conscience, and a stimulus to excite our fallen nature. We have merged our Christianity in the world, and taken its maxims and rules to be the laws of our regenerate life.

Most true it is, that a life in the midst of the world is a life of peculiar danger. Employments, offices, charges, professions, bring great entanglements, doubts, and absorbing occupations. It needs a strong spirit to stem them in safety. To with-

draw from the world is a sign not only of a desire for greater perfection, but of a consciousness of our own weakness. Let these, then, be our safeguards; first, to be thoroughly aware that, in a busy life, there must be manifold temptations; and next, that so far from being a dispensation from higher rules of devotion, we do indeed more truly need them. We need all the retirement we can get from the world to recollect ourselves, and to measure the deviations of our minds from the law of our Lord's example. We ought thankfully to take all the helps the Church provides for us. It was for the world, and for those who are forced to dwell in it, that the visible Church was set up. Without it, this noisy, importunate, besieging world would soon obliterate from our minds the traces of our unseen home. We ought to mould all our plans and habits of daily work upon the order of the Church, and make secular engagements bend and subject themselves to its sacred order of offices and hours. Daily prayers, the continual admonition of visible rites and tokens of faith, frequent receiving of the holy communion, days of festival, seasons of fasting, necessary as they are for pastors and retired Christians, are still more urgently needed by those whose habitual work brings on daily decays of fervour. They have to strengthen themselves against a multiplied action of the world, in

depressing and deteriorating the standard of their inner life. For through our own imperfection, the most lawful and innocent callings become occasions of our own hurt. But this we may entirely believe, that, if we will seek God in all our employments, He will convert them into a discipline of perfection; they will help us onward in our course; in the work of the world we shall be sanctified. Even in the unlikeliest duties and seasons, the most secular and remote from a devout life, when all seems dry, parched, and earthly, He will make us to understand that His grace is sufficient for us. He will fulfil His promise, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the *wilderness* a pool of water, and the *dry land* springs of water."[1]

[1] Isaiah xli. 17, 18.

SERMON XVII.

PRAYER A MARK OF TRUE HOLINESS.

St. Mark i. 35.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

The Evangelists seem especially guided to record, for our instruction, the private devotions of our Lord: they speak of them with a frequency and a particularity which shews how large a portion of His life was spent in prayer to God. We read in one place, "When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when evening was come, He was there alone."[1] Again: "And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed." Again: "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."[2] And again: "And it came to pass about

[1] St. Matt. xiv. 23. [2] St. Luke v. 16; vi. 12.

an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering."[1] Now all these things bring vividly before us His habitual communing with His heavenly Father, before daybreak, all night long, in solitary places, on the mountain, in the wilderness; they teach us that a large part of His earthly life He spent in prayer. Now, there are many points of instruction suggested to us by this; but that to which I desire to refer is, the mysterious fact that He did pray Who is One with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Why should He who was sinless, perfect, and in need of nothing, pray? In one word, because, although as God He hears the prayers of men, yet as Man it was an act proper to His true humanity.

Let us consider, then, the reasons why in this He must needs have been as we are.

1. First of all, without doubt, He prayed for the furtherance of that work which His Father had given Him to do. It is remarkable, that the occasions of retirement and prayer mentioned by the Evangelists are those which precede the miracle of walking on the water, the going forth to preach, the choice of the apostles, the transfiguration, the

[1] St. Luke ix. 28, 29.

temptation of Peter, and His own betrayal in the garden. Thus far His prayers seem to have reference to His work; and He Himself declared of the lunatic whom His disciples could not heal, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."[1] It is plain, then, that His praying was no mere conformity to our necessities, no economy to serve only as an example for us; but a real supplication for such things as the work He had taken in hand demanded. What those things may be, it is not for us to imagine. For Himself, nothing could be needed. There was in Him virtue to move mountains, and to suspend the laws of the world. It may be, that His prayers were for those on whom and in whose favour His miraculous powers were to be exerted, inasmuch as their efficacy depended on the moral state of those who were to be subjects of His grace. In one place we read, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." To the two blind men He said, "According to your faith be it unto you."[2] His prayers, then, it may be, were for those on whom His power and His words should fall, that they might be disposed by the Spirit of God for the reception of His saving grace; or, as in the choice and mission of His apostles, that they might be true and faithful messengers of the kingdom of

[1] St. Matt. xvii. 21. [2] St. Matt. xiii. 58; ix. 29.

heaven. So also in His prayer for the unity of His Church at the last supper; and in His supplication on the cross, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do:" what were these, but the beginnings of His all-prevailing intercession for us before the throne of God? The whole world, from its first sin to its last judgment, lay before Him; and the subtilty of Satan, the power of death, the misery of mankind, were ever on His soul. All holy Himself, yet in the midst of so great a fall of God's creation, how could there lack matter for continual prayer? Amidst the contradiction of sinners, and the deadness of the unbelieving, with the foresight of the great sin of the world which should be committed in His own Passion, with the whole career and probation of His Church through this perilous world, before His prophetic intuition, we may in some little measure understand what yearning desires of love and sorrow moved Him to all but unceasing intercession.

2. But His prayers were not altogether for others. Deeply mysterious as it is, they were offered also for Himself. We should hardly dare to say so, if holy Scripture were not most plain and explicit. For instance, when He entered for the last time into Jerusalem, He said, "Now is My soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto

this hour."[1] And at the last supper: "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son." Again: "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."[2] And in His agony in the garden: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. . . . He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done. . . . . And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."[3] "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."[4] It is, no doubt, of this awful passage of His life in particular, though perhaps not exclusively, that St. Paul writes, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."[5] And in that last agony we read expressly, as if in answer to His prayers, "there appeared an angel

[1] St. John xii. 27.
[2] St. John xvii. 1, 5.
[3] St. Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.
[4] St. Luke xxii. 44.
[5] Heb. v. 7, 8.

from heaven, strengthening Him."[1] Wonderful humiliation of the Son of God, to faint, to be in an agony, to pray, to be strengthened by an angel! Into this deep and hidden conflict of soul we cannot penetrate; but from it we may learn the awfulness of sin and death, which could thus afflict the Word made flesh; and the mighty strength of prayer, which stayed up His soul, and drew from heaven an angel to uphold Him in the hour of darkness. It was a property of His true humanity that He should derive strength through prayer; and a part of His humiliation for us that He should need to pray.

3. And once more. He prayed while He was on earth, because prayer was the nearest return to the glory which He laid aside when He was made Man. It was, if we may so speak, His only true dwelling, rest, home, delight. We read of His weeping, and His being wearied, of His being troubled in spirit; but we never read that He rested, except upon the brink of a well by the wayside; nor that He slept, except in the ship.

Most utterly sad and desolate His outward lot in this world. "Foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head."

Prayer and converse with His Father in hea-

[1] St. Luke xxii. 44.

ven was the only shelter into which the world could not break. Where He prayed was holy ground, and for the time was altogether His own. And to the mountain and the solitude He withdrew, leaving all, even the disciple whom He loved, that He might hold converse with His Father in heaven. It is remarkable that the public tokens of love which were given Him from heaven were all in acts of prayer. At His baptism, St. Luke writes, "Jesus also being baptised and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased."[1] At His transfiguration we read that He "went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, . . . and a cloud overshadowed them; . . . and there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him."[2] What may have been the visitations of His Father's love and consolation in His secret communion with Him, we cannot so much as conceive. Without doubt they were times of unspeakable bliss; when

[1] St. Luke iii. 21, 22. [2] St. Luke ix. 28-31, 35.

the light of God's countenance, and the fulness of His Father's love, were shed abroad in His soul. What must have been the communing of the Word made flesh with His heavenly Father; what mingling of eternal love, what perfect unity of will! And may we not believe that He, by whose Spirit the prophets spake of old, foresaw at all times, but specially in seasons of retired communion with God, the full mystery of love, the abolition of sin and death, the perfect reconciliation of God and man, the company of the elect, the holiness of the saints, the glorious martyrdom of His servants, the perfection of His Church, the new creation of God? If in His hours of agony the darker shadows of the future hung upon Him, may we not believe that in His hours of prayer the brighter lights of His invisible kingdom shone full upon His soul?

Now, from this view, we may learn, first, that a life of habitual prayer is a life of the highest perfection; and that our prayer will be more or less perfect in proportion as our state of holiness is more or less advanced. The most perfect example of prayer is His who was most perfect in holiness. None prayed such fervent, frequent, unwearied prayers as He who was without sin.

There is something at first sight paradoxical in saying, that prayer is the beginning of conversion to God, and also the highest token of perfec-

tion. Yet so it is. Prayer is the very breath of the regenerate life. Without it no spirit of man can live. Prayer is also the nearest approach to the work of saints unseen, to the heavenly glory, to the beatific vision. It is well to bear this in mind; for in what do people more deceive and distress themselves than in the duty of prayer? Sometimes we see people living on in a full belief that they do pray, when we have every reason to believe that they have never so much as realised the very idea of what prayer is; for instance, persons of a correct life, with cold affections, strong understandings, watchful against what they call enthusiasm and excited feelings; or again, those who take the tone of the world, live in society, busy themselves with it usages and events; people of an external life, who live out of their own hearts, having their attention drawn away from themselves, and their thoughts active about this visible world. Now, such people are often exemplary in their regularity at all stated duties of religion; and they go through them with such a sufficiency of outward care and punctuality, that there appears nothing to be supplied. But, after all, something seems perceptibly wanting within. Perhaps it may be expressed in fewest words as the want of realising their own personal relation to God, and the nearness of His presence to them in acts of prayer.

But we have no need to speak of others. Who is there that does not know what this means? Who is there that has not passed through such a state of dangerous insensibility; and has become conscious now, in looking back, for how many years his prayers were really mere recitations, without realising the awful directness of our approach to God? And yet all the time we were as unconscious of it as if there were nothing that we did not fully perceive. How long this deceit still hung about us! And though we began at last to be painfully aware of our blindness and lukewarmness, our wandering and distraction in the very act of praying, yet we never half suspected the right cause. For example, how many of us have felt it easier to maintain at least external reverence in public worship than in private prayer, partly because the eyes of others were upon us, and partly because our attention was stimulated by the devotions of others. When we have gone into our own private room, we have seemed to become altogether changed; our thoughts abroad, our affections cold, and our very body weary of kneeling. On the other hand, many people greatly distress themselves about their prayers: I do not say needlessly, for there is need enough; but their distress is often an obstruction rather than a help. They complain of indevotion, of inability to pray, or to fix their

minds. It seems to them to be altogether unreal, and a sort of forced and artificial state of mind.

Now, it is of course impossible to lay down any laws in a matter so mysterious, and so nearly related to the inscrutable workings of the Spirit of God. It is indeed true that sometimes men converted late in life, or after great sins, or by sudden causes, exhibit a wonderful vividness of compunction and a fervent spirit of prayer. But these are exempt cases; and even they often subside afterwards into the condition in which the great majority of men are to be found. For the most part the habit of prayer keeps pace with, or but little outstrips, the habit of patience, meekness, humility, and the like; that is to say, it is matured with the maturing of the spiritual life. And indeed it seems plain that it must be so; for what are the springs of prayer but a sense of sinfulness, a desire of abasement and of sanctification? But before these can exist, the moral effects of past sins, by which the edge of the conscience has been blunted and the purity of the affections soiled, must be in part taken away. This is not the work of a day, but of a long season, often of years; and these hindrances must be borne as a deserved chastisement and humiliation. In this way even the matter of our distress becomes a wholesome discipline for our correction. We cannot, without long and

persevering endeavours, imitate our Lord in His prayers, any more than in His patience. We must be first, in some measure, conformed to Him in the perfections of His heavenly life, before our hearts can pour themselves out in fervent intercessions. The most perfect prayers are those of saints and of little children, because in both there is the same freedom from the hard, unconcerned, self-contemplative habit of mind which besets the common sort of Christians, and the same presence of awe, tenderness of conscience, simplicity, and truth. The very weakness of children has the same effect as the strength of saints. Children have not yet learned to know the world, and saints have renounced it, and both are free from its solicitations and intrusions.

2. There is another point to be considered. The spirit of prayer is a direct gift from God. This great truth has been so abused by the fanaticism and self-delusion of unstable men, that others of a more chastened temper have recoiled into the opposite extreme. They confine it practically, though they would not say so, to the acts of our own minds. To pray is a high grace given to us from heaven. For prayer does not mean the ready utterance which flows from excitement of imagination, or fluency of speech, nor any of the mere intellectual powers with which men have de-

ceived others and themselves; but from the depth of contrition and self-reproach, from earnest resolutions of self-chastisement, strong aspirations after perfect holiness and the bliss of fellowship with God. And all these are the gifts of that One Spirit which "helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."[1] After all our endeavours and prayers, it is from Him that we must receive the grace of prayer. "I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look on Me whom they have pierced." It is in proportion as we receive clearer insight into the depth and ingratitude of sin, into the passion and love of Christ, that we shall learn to pray. "And they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."[2]

Prayer springs from compunction, and compunction from love to Him whom our sins have pierced; and to perceive this is the gift of God, sometimes

[1] Rom. viii. 26, 27. [2] Zech. xii. 10.

given early in the life of a penitent, but for the most part after years of fear and mortification; for these perceptions are not emotions raised by our own efforts, nor can we by any intellectual process gain them, or create them for ourselves; they are insights and intuitions of the Spirit freely given from above, and passively received by those who, in truth and sincerity of heart, have diligently waited upon God in prayer. There are, indeed, higher revelations with which He favours those whom He will: but they are not to be expressed in words, nor to be understood, even if they could be uttered; nor are they to be sought by us, being too excellent for us; nor to be contemplated and rested in, when given; nor are they graces that are necessary for salvation, but gifts vouchsafed to few. And even they who receive them have some counter-token to make such high endowments safe. He who was caught up into the third heaven, lest he should be "lifted up," had also sent unto him "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him." Let us therefore leave all, even our prayers, in God's hand. Let us not seek high things for ourselves, lest we should not be able to bear them; lest we should fall into the delusion of the enemy, and mistake heated and overstrained fancies for the realities of God's kingdom. To seek after high tokens of God's favour, is to pass a judgment on ourselves that we are such

as may expect them, and could receive them in humility and in safety. But they who think so, plainly shew that they are not such as could endure them without danger. Such things are rather for those who like Peter, when he saw the miracle of the fishes, said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Yet even he, after that, when he saw somewhat of his Master's glory, talked of building three tabernacles, not knowing what he said.

Therefore let us be lowly even in our prayers; seeking to be real and sincere, conscious of our infinite spiritual wants, our manifold and exceeding imperfections. It is beyond all our deservings that we should be allowed to speak with Him at all. It is enough for us that we may "make our requests known unto God." For all that remains let us trust ourselves in His hands. He will shew us such things as it is good for us to see in this state of humiliation. Let us, like our Lord, withdraw ourselves at times not only from the world, but from those dearest to us, from our closest friendships and most intimate affections, that we may be alone with God. Let us learn how precious are solitary places, and hours when others are sleeping or away; in the night-season, or "a great while before day," when the earth and heaven are still, and the busy world has not yet come abroad to trouble the creation of God.

And lastly, we may learn that, as the sacrifice of Christ is the one only effectual sacrifice, so is His the one only true and all-prevailing prayer. All our prayers are accepted in His, which are the life and strength of all. The intercession of His Church goes up perpetually through Him unto His Father. In itself it is weak and imperfect: but He is the life of His mystical body; and in Him the prayers of saints, the aspirations of pure hearts, the mourning of the contrite, the confessions of penitents, the strong crying of the afflicted, the self-reproaches of convicted sinners, ascend as one intercession, as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, to the throne of God. In the vision which St. John saw, an "angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."[1] This is He who "continueth ever," and "hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."[2]

[1] Rev. viii. 3, 4. [2] Heb. vii. 24.

SERMON XVIII.

SHORT DEVOTIONS A HINDRANCE TO PRAYER.

St. Luke vi. 12.

"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."

We are not to suppose, because we read this only once in the Gospels, that it was only this once in His life that our blessed Lord spent all the night in prayer. The history of His words and deeds, as it is written by the Evangelists, does not profess to give all that He said or did. Indeed, St. John expressly declares, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."[1] We have but a small part in the four Gospels; and yet that part is so recorded as to contain, imply, and extend over all the rest. If we may reverently use a phrase of so critical a sound,

[1] St. John xxi. 25.

it may be said that they contain the perfect idea and outline of His character, together with such instances as express the whole habit and principle of His life. Therefore these words of St. Luke may be taken to imply, not only that He passed that particular night alone in prayer, or in an oratory[1] on the mountain, as the words may mean, but that such was His wont: that long retirement and protracted communing with God were habitual to Him. Now the point I would notice is, the great length of time He thus gave to prayer; and we will consider how far it has the force of an example or precept to us. Many people will say, that it applies to us, if at all, in a very remote and restricted way; and the arguments they bring are not without a show of reason. But a little deeper thought will convince us that the reverse is true. We will, however, take the chief objections, and weigh them one by one.

1. It is commonly said, that such prolonged acts of prayer issued from the perfection of His divine Person; that they were, so to speak, attributes of One who was without sin, and in unbroken fellowship with God. It cannot be denied that there is truth in this. We know that angels, who "excel in strength," serve God without intermission; and the heavenly hosts, in their adoration, "rest not day

[1] ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

and night." In fact, it may be said that sustained devotion is a perfection—an endowment of those who are delivered from the power of sin. And a powerful argument comes in aid of this, from the sensible fact of our distraction and weariness in prayer, which seem to be universal, and to cleave to us, even to the best of men, to the end of life. But does not this objection put out of sight the most important truth of all? It is indeed most true, that the sustained and blissful communion which He held with His Father—a converse without the wandering of a desire or thought, a fellowship of consolation, strength, and peace—that this, indeed, is beyond our reach. Few attain, even in kind, an approach to it; and they seldom; and many never. They who enjoy it are admitted to it only for a while and at seasons; with long intervals, and uncertain returns. In this, indeed, the example of our Master finds but a restricted counterpart in us. Yet it does not take off the force of it. His prayers were blissful as He was perfect; but ours are necessary because of our imperfections. We must not, however, suppose that His prayers were only adorations, because from one who stands in need of nothing. It is a mystery of faith, how He that filleth all should pray as if needing of another's fulness; yet it is only the mystery of the Incarnation in its consequences. It

is akin to His temptation and His agony, in which He was ministered to and strengthened by angels. And we are expressly told that He prayed "with strong crying and tears," "and was heard in that He feared."[1] His prayers were uttered out of the depths of His sinless infirmities, and had their answers from on high; but in what way we know not, nor shall do well too curiously to seek. This brings His example nearer to us. His nights of prayer, then, were not simple exercises of His exceeding spiritual strength; they were also the earnest cleaving of man to God. And if the infirmities of a sinless being drew Him so mightily to God, how much more ought the sin that is in us to drive us to the Divine Presence for healing and for strength! The contrast of our weakness with His perfection gives us no discharge from His example: rather, it adds a greater force. It brings out a farther and deeper reason, which makes the law of prayer to us the very condition of life. If we do not pray, we perish. It is no answer to say we are weak, and cannot continue in prayer as He. That very weakness is in itself the necessity which forces us to pray. His perfect prayers are only the standard we must aim at—the pattern of what our prayers should be. If ours are unlike His, so much the greater need to give ourselves to greater devotion: the more unlike,

[1] Heb. v. 7.

the more need there is to pray. All that can be made of this objection, then, is this: Such is our sinful and weak state, that His perfect devotions are beyond our strength. And the conclusion that follows is, therefore, not that we may contentedly aim at a lower rule, but that we ought all the more to humble, and train ourselves upon a discipline which leads to His perfection. In a word, the very objection which pleads the difficulty of following His example, proves the necessity which constrains us to follow it.

2. Again, it is often said, "There can be no doubt that more time ought to be given by us all to the duty of prayer. Well were it if we were able to follow, in all things, the example of our Lord; but this is plainly impossible. We are entangled in the world, burdened by its duties and its employments; our time is not our own; it is very hard to get an unbroken hour. There is always something demanding our whole attention: business, labour, the claims of others, the harmless usages of society, the charities of life, the cares of home, the service of the sick and poor, the instruction of children, and the like. In a word, it is impossible for those who live an active and a busy life to find time for long private devotions."

From the tone in which some people speak, one would think that our blessed Master had lived

a leisurely and unimpeded life; that He had nothing else to do but to live alone in retirement and solitude, in prayer and contemplation: and this of One, whose whole life was toil, amid crowds and multitudes, hungry and wayworn, full of calls and interruptions. Certainly the life of our Lord exhibits to us the most perfect example of constant employments. If any thing in it be prominent, it is the multitude of works, the never-ending service of all that came or sent for Him, in sick chambers, in homes of sorrow, in synagogues, in Pharisees' houses, in the Temple, in the mid-stream of men. It were rather true to say, that hardly any man's life was ever yet so broken in upon, and taken from him by labour, and care, and the importunity of others, as His; and yet He is to us the perfect example of devotion. It was the toil of the day that turned His night into a vigil. That which we plead as excuse was the very cause why "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." In which He teaches us, that whatever else we forego, we may not forego our prayers; whatever else is at our will to give up, this is not; however necessary we may think other things, this is the thing needful above all; our work must be done, and yet our devotions must not be left undone. Our Lord's example in this is especially pointed and instructive to those who are wont to plead their worldly

duties in excuse. He has abolished this plea beforehand; He has exposed its untruth by anticipation; and, moreover, He has taught us that here again the very reverse of this excuse is the truth. They who live in the world are so far from being released from stricter habits of private devotion, that they, above all, need them most. The busier their daily thoughts, the greater need of recollection at night. The more closely the world presses upon them all day long, the more need is there for them to break loose from it, and to give themselves up again to God, when the day is done. What else remains to them? If the world has indeed the dominion of their days; if so long as light lasts, their whole activity and all its powers must be given to trade, or merchandise, or studies, or official employments, or the practice of courts, or even to ministries of healing, as physicians and pastors; what remains to them, but to reclaim from the hours when at last the world is at rest some of the time on which it keeps so tyrannous a hold? Verily these are they who, most of all men, have need to "redeem the time, because the days are evil."[1] It is indeed true, that multiplicity of labours and employments makes retirement very hard to obtain; but it makes it all the more necessary. All activity not controlled by the presence of God, has in it a tendency to with-

[1] Ephes. v. 16.

draw the mind from Him, and to render it less open towards Him, less susceptible of passive impressions, and less conscious of an unseen presence. So, again, all excitements, not only of a worldly and corrupting sort, as pleasure, gaining, ambition, and the like, but even the purer kinds, are adverse to devotion. A highly intellectual habit of thought, such as students or professional men usually live in, has a very subtil effect on the mind: it makes it over-active; so that the stillness and fixedness necessary in prayer are irksome and peculiarly difficult. Also it tends to dry up and to deaden the affections, on which devotion is chiefly engrafted. This is true even of pastors, in the study of divine truth, and in the exercise of their spiritual ministry. Over-activity often leads to indevotion, and busy care about others to forgetfulness of our own soul. And if this be true of us, how much more of those whose lot is cast in the world, and whose scene of toil is among the snares and secularities of life! But into this I will not go farther now; we shall have need to come back to it hereafter. All that it is necessary to say is, that the common excuse made by even well-meaning people for their low habits of devotion, is no excuse at all: rather, all the force it has is on the other side, in the way of warning and admonition. Alas for the man that is too busy to pray; for he is too busy to be saved.

3. But once more. It may be said, "All this proves too much; for if it prove any thing, it proves that we ought to give up our natural rest and our night's sleep, and to break the common habits of a regular life in a way that health and sound discretion, and almost the humility which avoids singularities and extremes, would equally forbid." It may be asked, "Do you literally mean, that we ought ever to 'continue the whole night in prayer?' for if not, do you not give up the argument and the example; and then what measure of time will you fix?" It may not be amiss to say, that better men than ourselves, and that in all times, have seen reason to take these words even to the letter; and their lives have been a witness to their sound discretion, and to their humility. The very name of vigil, which the Church puts into our mouths, has some deeper and fuller meaning than we are wont to give it. This is an age of metaphors and accommodations: words once realities are now but figures, symbols of vague notions. Now-a-days a vigil is the evening before a Feast, in which men *used* in early times to watch and pray; and it stands for the duty of watchfulness. We have grown to be great masters of defining by glosses and parables. This at least may be said: there are many of us who would think it reasonable and discreet to spend a whole night in study, or writing, or in conversation,

or in the levities of the world, or in travelling; who have done and still do this, and yet have never passed a night in contemplation and prayer, and would think it extravagant to do so. My object in saying this is, to shew in what unequal scales even fair and religious people weigh these things. Is it not true, that people who would, without a word, travel many nights together for business or amusement, would positively resent the notion of spending even a few hours of Christmas or Easter Eve in prayer and self-examination? However, it is enough for the present purpose to say, that whosoever would live a life of prayer, must spend no small part of every day in praying. There is no art or science, no practice or faculty of which the human mind is capable, that demands for its acquirement so much time as a habit of prayer. One of the chief reasons why we find it so hard to pray, one of the chief causes of all our distraction, wandering, and indevotion, is, the infrequency and shortness of our prayers. It is indeed true, that prayer is in one sense a gift of God: He pours out on whomsoever He will "the spirit of grace and supplications;"[1] "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be

[1] Zech. xii. 10.

uttered."[1] Nevertheless, the same is equally true of purity and humility; they both are gifts of grace, yet subjected to the conditions of our nature, and to be made our own by discipline and in time. So it is with prayer. And, indeed, if we will but consider what the act of prayer is, we shall see that, of all the spiritual powers of the regenerate soul, it is the highest and most nearly akin to perfection. It is no less than speaking with God under a consciousness of His presence, with kindled desires, and a submitted will. It implies the presence and energy of faith, love, and repentance. Such as we are, such our prayers will be. It is the unfolding of ourselves in God's sight; and there must needs go before it and with it a knowledge of ourselves, founded on habitual self-examination. And for this, stated and not short seasons of silence and retirement in the presence of God are absolutely needed.

Now what is actually the state of most people? They pray twice in the day. Their prayers are, for the most part, certain fixed and ever-recurring forms of devotion; in themselves good, but necessarily general both in confession and petition. These prayers are said over with more or less of attention, desire, feeling, and emotion. They take, it may be, a quarter of an hour in the morning,

[1] Rom. viii. 26.

and the same at night. They are often not preceded by conscious preparation, nor followed by prescribed acts of reflection. They are parentheses in the day, which will not read into the context of life, but are entered and left by a sensible transition of the mind. To this, perhaps, is added, in most cases, a reading of the Bible once in the course of the day. With some there lingers still the remains of an excellent and most significant practice of reading the appointed Psalms and Lessons—a memorial of better times, and an unconscious act of unity, in spirit and intention, with those who daily pray before the altars of the Church. Now the time spent in these habits is half an hour in prayer, and perhaps the same in reading. If to this be added family prayers, a quarter of an hour in the morning, and the same at night, I believe we shall have taken no unfavourable sample of the measure of time given to their daily prayers by persons even of a serious and religious character. It cannot be doubted that such people would pass for devout persons; nor will I, which God forbid, gainsay their claim to be so esteemed. But what does it come to, after all? One hour and a half in every twenty-four. And how are the rest allotted? Nine or ten to sleep and its circumstantials, two or three hours spent over food; four or five, that is, whole morn-

ings and whole evenings, given up to conversation, visits, amusements, and what the world calls society; the rest consumed in various employments of various degrees of nearness to, or remoteness from, the presence and thought of God. Now, assuredly, if this world were not a fallen world, if all its spontaneous daily movements were in harmony with the will of God and the state beyond the grave, there would be no harm in resting upon those movements, and in being borne along with them. But if it be indeed a world fallen from God; and if in its fairest forms it be still, at least by privation of righteousness, sinful in His sight, then to live in it as if it were not fallen cannot but estrange us from real communion with Him. An hour and a half of better thoughts in every day will not disinfect our hearts, and counterwork the perpetual and transforming action of the world in all the rest of our time. In this point, busy and toilworn people have an advantage over the more leisurely; for business and labour are a part of the fall, and have in them chastisement and humiliation. There is great danger, in cases like that which I have taken, lest such minds, though in many ways blameless and pure, should be strangers to the deeper things of God, and to the realities of compunction and devotion.

To the case I have supposed, one more point

may be added: I mean, attendance at the daily prayers of the Church. Measured by time, this adds somewhat more than another hour in the day; but after all, what is it? Not so much as three hours for God, and one-and-twenty for ourselves. Alas for us! what would they judge of us, those saints of old, who wore the very stones with their perpetual kneelings? What would they say of our distribution of time? Would they acknowledge us among the number of those that pray? What would they answer to our complaints of wandering and distraction, and unseasonable thoughts, and unconsciousness of God's presence? Would they wonder that it is so with us? I trow not. Should we not hear: "In the evening, and morning, and at noonday will I pray, and that instantly, and He shall hear my voice." "Seven times a day do I praise Thee, because of Thy righteous judgments." "Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might be occupied in Thy law." "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: yea, I say, more than they that watch for the morning." "My voice shalt Thou hear betimes, O Lord: early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up."[1] "At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto Thee, because of Thy righteous judg-

[1] Ps. lv. 17; cxix. 164, 148; cxxx. 6.

ments." "I have thought upon Thy name in the night-season, and have kept Thy law."[1]

I will add only two remarks, and then conclude.

1. First, it is plain that there can be no exact measure of time fixed for our prayers. If any were fixed, we should be in great danger of forming a mechanical habit, and of resting in it when mechanically fulfilled. It is the very character of our trial that we are under a law of liberty. It were easier to many to recite a prescribed number of prayers in a prescribed space of time, than to say one prayer with devotion. This is a wholesome and necessary admonition to those who have the blessing of the daily prayers of the Church. The salt which alone can keep the daily service from corruption is increased prayer in private. If this "have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" In such frequent, prolonged, public, and, I may say, familiar approaches to God, there is great danger of forming a hard, business-like insensibility in the very act of praying. No time, then, can be exactly prescribed. The end alone can measure what is needful. And that end is, the fellowship of a wakeful and collected mind with God. No time that fails to attain this, be it short or long, is enough. But though no measure of time can be fixed for all, yet one thing

[1] Ps. cxix. 62, 55.

it is safe to say: we ought all of us to be longer on our knees before God than we are at present. And longer we should be, if we truly knew our own state, or if we had so much as a moment's clear perception of the awfulness of God's presence, or of the bliss of perfect prayer. This at least may be said, that to hurry suddenly into His presence, and to hurry out of it again, is no sign of our so much as understanding the first idea of worship. There is something irreverent in these sudden transitions; as if our minds were always meet to approach Him, and there were nothing needed but a momentary act of our will. Our prayers cannot fail to be full of distraction, if we enter upon them without first setting ourselves, by acts of conscious recollection, in His presence. What, after all, is the key of our distractions, but the fact that we so faintly realise the presence of God when we are upon our knees? Another practical rule is this: we may be sure that we do not give time enough to prayer, so long as either the ordinary habits of our life continue to thrust themselves in upon our devotions, or our habits of devotion fail to check and sanctify the ordinary habits of our life. Till we reach this point, we shall be in no danger of giving too much time to our prayers; and that is a sufficient and a safe practical answer, and a good rule to go by.

2. The other remark I would make is, that there are peculiar difficulties and temptations attending a habit of prayer, by which people are often greatly distressed. The more they endeavour to prolong their acts of prayer, the more sensible they become of the instability and levity of their minds. Many feel this in respect to the prayers of the Church, especially when the Holy Communion is administered. But perhaps the commonest form of this trial is in the daily service. Really earnest people, who delight in being, day by day, before the altar, and would not forfeit the prayers of morning and evening for any inducement, do nevertheless sometimes go through the whole service with a perfectly absent mind. At the beginning of every prayer they resolve to unite their desires to it throughout, and at the end come to themselves again, and perceive that all has been a blank before them. This is very disquieting, and fills them with painful and mistrustful thoughts. It is indeed a matter for compunction and humiliation. It is a token of their great spiritual infirmity. But it is a good thing to be made painfully aware of it. And this is one of the benefits resulting from the length of the prayers, and from the habit of daily service. It acts as a detector to test and exhibit their true internal state. With shorter and less frequent services they

might have gone on for ever without finding out their secret indevotion; and all the while it would be no less real, though undiscovered. It is good to be convicted, lest we deceive ourselves. And the use we should make of the offices of the Church when we cannot follow them is, to chastise our indevotion by them, and to strengthen the habits of silence, reverence, and attention, which are the basis of a devout spirit. Even though, through our weakness or our sin, we fail to sustain our conscious and direct prayers, yet frequent and stated returns to God's presence lay the foundations of obedience, and obedience is the very source of fervent prayer. In the relaxed state of our spiritual discipline, it is good to have this undesigned, though somewhat austere rule. There is another part of our public worship, which, though not intended, supplies a highly beneficial practice of devotion. I mean, the great length of time while the Holy Sacrament is being distributed to communicants. Some people strongly and inconsiderately complain of this. But it is a blessed and wholesome thing to be so encompassed, as it were, by the presence of God, that for a while we can employ ourselves in nothing but prayer and meditation. In our busy, excited, intellectual, distracted life, it is a good thing to have even our mental activity for a while forcibly suspended, and our minds left wholly without support

or stay, except in the thought of God. It is good to have even religious books withdrawn for a time; for manuals of devotion often divert the mind from its own personal acts, and substitute the thought of devotion for the reality. While the Body and Blood of Christ are being given to His people at the altar, we can do nothing but turn inwardly upon our own consciousness of His presence with us, and of our actual state before Him. Let us, then, look upon all trials and difficulties in prayer as no more than we must meet in the discipline of every part of a holy life. And let us be thankful that we are in any way brought to know how far we are fallen from God, how unmeet for the inheritance of the saints in light, whose ministry of love and worship has no intermission; only let the consciousness of our distractions in prayer make us pray oftener, and more; for by prayer alone can they be overcome. There is no other cure. Let us, in spite of all, cleave to this, and we shall find all well at last, when we shall no longer worship Him under the veil of His unseen Presence, but before the Throne, where our "eyes shall behold the King in His beauty."

SERMON XIX.

THE LONGSUFFERING OF CHRIST.

St. Matt. xviii. 21, 22.

"Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

In St. Luke's Gospel this same answer is given with a change of expression which makes it even more emphatic: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."[1] In St. Matthew's Gospel, the parable of the two servants who owed, the one ten thousand talents, and the other an hundred pence, immediately follows. It is therefore evident, that the great law of mutual forgiveness is founded

[1] St. Luke xvii. 3, 4.

both on the law of nature, and on the fact of the still greater forgiveness which we have received at God's hand. If He have forgiven us so much, what is there that we shall not forgive our brother? if He have forgiven us so often, how can we ever refuse forgiveness? Seventy times seven, seven times in a day, what is this to those who have the forgiveness of God through the blood of Jesus Christ?

But the point I wish to draw attention to is, not the duty of forgiveness as it is here enjoined, but the character of Christ as it is revealed in these words. It is plain that He does not lay on us a rule of mercy by which He does not proceed Himself. He has not two measures, or an unequal balance. As He would have us measure to others, so He will mete to us. The law He here lays down is a transcript of Himself: this seventy times sevenfold remission, what is it but His unwearied mercy? and what is this "seven times in a day," but His all-enduring patience?

Now it is this particular truth which distinguishes the Gospel from all religions of nature, and even from all other measures of the earlier revelations of God. The great truth here revealed to us is, the love, clemency, forgiveness of God to sinners. All this was, indeed, exhibited before in promises and prophecies, and in God's manifest dealings with His chosen people of old;

but it was never so fully revealed as by the Incarnation and atonement of Christ. It may be said with truth, that a full perception of this great mystery of mercy is the very life of faith; and that there is nothing we are slower and more unwilling to believe in its truth and fulness. The greatness of it is too large for our narrow hearts. It is very easy to say, God is merciful, Christ is full of compassion; but these general truths, as we utter them, are limited and overcast by others not less certain. For if the Gospel has revealed God's mercy, it has also revealed God's holiness; if it has taught us that God is Love, it has also taught us that He is "a consuming fire." With the atonement, we have learned the judgment to come; with the sacrifice of Christ, we have learned the guilt of sin; with the gift of regeneration, the defilement of our inmost soul; if baptism has brought us remission, it has made sins after baptism more fearful. The Gospel is an awful twofold light, before which even faithful Christians tremble, and often see but in part, and, through weakness and fear, and the earthliness of their hearts, often believe and speak amiss. It seems inconceivable that God should pardon so great sins as ours; or if He pardon us once, that He should pardon us when we fall again. The number and the frequency of our falls and swervings, the many warnings and the full light against which we often

offend; the periodical returns of temptation, and, with them, of disobedience; the depth and intensity of guilt which even lesser sins attain by repetition after repentance; above all, when committed neither by surprise, nor by suddenness, but with a certain measure of deliberation, and with enough of resistance to shew that nothing can be pleaded in excuse: all these, and a multitude more of particulars, which it is impossible to touch on in detail, make people often feel that, undoubted as is the perfect and exhaustless mercy of Christ, yet in their particular case there are features which shut them out from the consolation they would readily minister to others.

Now I am not going to argue against this feeling, so far as it promotes in us bitterness of repentance, fear, humiliation, and prayer for pardon. It is to be corrected only when it clashes with the perfect revelation of our Lord's character, and of His dealings with us. Too much humbled we cannot be, too tender of conscience, too fearful to offend; but we may dishonour Him by unworthy and faithless mistrusts, by thinking that He is verily such an one as ourselves, and that His forgiveness is no readier and broader than the perception we form of it in our hearts. If there be any one thing of vital force in a life of Christian obedience, it is a true and full knowledge of Him

whom we obey. His character is our very law; it imposes on us the conditions of our whole life, in thought, word, and deed, and defines the whole of our relations to Him. Now these words of His in the text reveal to us that to those who repent, howsoever often they may have sinned, there is perpetual forgiveness; that as often as we turn to Him, saying in truth, "I repent," He will take us back again. And this is, indeed, the very grace and mystery of the Gospel. Let us consider it a little more fully.

1. The state of man by creation was this: God made him sinless; he sinned, and died,—one sin, and all was lost. The work of creation had in it no remedial provision; it was a state of sanctity for a sinless creature; it contemplated no fall, no imperfection, no infirmity. Once fallen, all was marred; the relation of God and man once broken, the power of restoration must be sought in a new order and law of grace. The state of creation, then, was awful and severe in its perfection, and in itself had no remedy or healing for sin. Adam fell, lost his gift of righteousness, and passed under the power of death. He begat a son in his own likeness, and handed on the dark inheritance of the fall; the tide had set away from God, and every generation swelled the stream and made it run more fiercely. The first Adam was shorn of

all his powers, and there was no help in him. The fall and sorrow were the heirloom of his children.

2. Now it is exactly in this point that the Gospel, or the new creation, of which Christ our Lord, the second Adam, is the head and root, differs from the first. It is a mystery of restoration; it has in it an inexhaustible source of healing for the sin of the world. By one act of disobedience the first creation passed away for ever. The second is the perpetual remedy of sin. And this is the meaning of St. Paul's words: "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. . . . Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by

one, Jesus Christ."[1] In the first creation repentance had no place; in the second, repentance is the first idea and law; *it is a dispensation given to penitents.* That is to say, Christ has made atonement for sin; He has taken away the sin of the world. By His obedience, and by His death, He has cancelled, in the unseen world, the sentence which is to us as inscrutable as the existence and origin of evil, to which mystery it is related. In this sense, then, the Gospel is emphatically a remedial dispensation; and for this end the Incarnation and atonement of the Son of God was accomplished. And farther: by its very first law it contemplates in us imperfection, frailty, and evil. It is a power to heal, and its mission is to the sick. That which could not so much as enter into the scope of the covenant of creation, fills the whole field of intention, so to speak, under the Gospel. It has to do with creatures both infirm and infected with sin; and for their raising, cleansing, and recovery, the whole ministration of the Spirit by mysteries and sacraments is shed abroad. And still more: even in those who are made partakers of these gifts of peace and grace—that is, in the regenerate—there yet remains the infection of original sin. To the end of life, though never so much subdued, it lingers still. The most perfect saint is not sinless;

[1] Rom. v. 12, 14-17.

this, since creation, has been the prerogative of One alone. It will be the inheritance of saints in bliss; but on earth, so long as they are in the flesh, there is in them the mystery of the fall. In some it is the spur to watchings, fastings, mortifications, prayers; it keeps them in perpetual watchfulness. God wonderfully keeping them, their footsteps never slide. These are they of whom St. John says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." And again: "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."[1] There is, doubtless, a state in which the fallen nature, though still in us, does not shape itself into sin—a high and rare endowment, the earthly crown of those who walk with God in a perfect way. In others (and they are the greater number, even among such as may be counted holy), the sin of our nature still abides, in the form of ignorance, obliquity, passion, frailty, and the like. Though these things be not imputed to them to their condemnation; though they do not so far prevail as to break their bond of peace with their unseen Lord; yet they are imperfections which the law of the first creation would not endure; they could find no sufferance but in a dispensation of healing, and under a law of restoration. The

[1] 1 St. John iii. 9; v. 18.

obedience of imperfect saints, though it could in nowise bear the severity of God's judgment, yet is pleasing in His sight for Christ's sake; and their imperfections are not laid to their charge as sins. The Incarnation of the Word made flesh has laid the beginnings of a new creation, in which, until they be made perfect, the imperfect obedience and imperfect nature of His servants is accepted as well-pleasing in the sight of God. Not that the Gospel is a relaxation of the Law, or a sort of easy compromise, by which, for Christ's sake, a lower standard of obedience is accepted in full, as if it were perfect. Far from it. As the light of truth has from the beginning waxed stronger and stronger in the world, shining more and more, through the ages of patriarchs and prophets, unto the perfect day, so did both the law of righteousness and the gifts of grace expand and grow upward to the law of Christ's example and the gift of regeneration. As a law of obedience, the Gospel is higher, deeper, holier, and more peremptory, in proportion as the grace of the Gospel is mightier and more abundant. It is not of types and shadows that St. John speaks, when he says, "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth;" but of the gift of righteousness, and of the law of love. Except the righteousness of a Christian exceed the righteousness of Gentile and of Jew, it will go hard with him in

the day of judgment. "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required." The grace of regeneration and of the holy eucharist has not been given to Christians that they should live less humbly in obedience and fear than the Jews. As they have greater gifts, blessings, and endowments, so have they higher laws, more searching precepts, more perfect counsels of devotion. Thus much is said by the way, lest in what has been expressed, any thing should seem by the farthest consequence to detract from the sanctity of the Gospel as a law of life. As a law of obedience, it is a transcript of Christ's perfection; but as a ministry of grace, it is full of healing and of divine compassion. It is a dispensation of forgiveness; and the very spirit and life of it is in this precept of our Master: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

Let us now take some particular cases to which this truth is directly applicable.

1. And, first, of those who fall into sin after baptism. In one sense this all men do; even those I have spoken of before, in whom the virtual presence of sin seems to us never to become actual; even they have all sinned. But I am not speaking of these, nor, indeed, of any whose life has been such as to keep unbroken the relation of peace and forgiveness between them and their Lord. We have

now to deal with the case of those who after baptism fall into sins which forfeit the favour and countenance of God. In dealing with these persons there have been two extremes: one is that of the Novatian heretics of old, who denied that there was to such any place for repentance; the other in these days, of those who treat sin after baptism as lightly as sin before it. Both these errors are a dishonour to our blessed Master: the one to His compassion, the other to His sanctity. It cannot, for a moment, be denied, that sin done in spite of the grace of baptism, and of the light of the Spirit, is far guiltier than the sins of any unbaptised man can be. We cannot say what wound it may inflict upon the soul, what it may forfeit in the kingdom of life, into how great peril it may bring us of the second death. Nevertheless, we were baptized into a state of repentance; we were thereby made partakers of the healing and perpetual restoration of the Gospel; we were put into a living relation to the Redeemer, in which there is the law and the grace of repentance for all sinners. We were regenerated, that we might be penitents; not, indeed, that we should lay up new matter for repentance—there is no need of that, God knoweth; but that we should repent all our days of the fallen nature which by our birth-sin is within us. And this regeneration contains in it

also the grace of repentance for those who fall again, and after their fall turn to Him for pardon. The grace of baptism, which should have been unto holiness, if resisted and baffled, may still become the grace of repentance. It is the plank of escape after shipwreck, perilous but sufficient, if clung to with a fast hold and a steady heart. So far, then, is sin after baptism from being excluded from forgiveness, that it is baptism that lays the foundation both of grace and promise to the repenting Christian.

2. Again: there is a darker case than that of those who have sinned after baptism: I mean, of those who have sinned after repentance. So deep and lasting is the hurt done to the spiritual nature of man by sin, that even after it is repented of, it still soils and weakens his heart; and for this reason so many who have become penitent of their past sins are again drawn into relapses. The same outward solicitations, after a while, address themselves with subtil allurements and sudden returns to the same surviving passions; and there are few penitents who have not been more than once retaken in the same snares, after they have begun to break them. There is no need to say that this is a dangerous condition. Such a man grieves not only the Spirit of regeneration, but the Spirit of repentance; he lessens the force and power of warnings

and convictions, fears and hopes, upon his conscience and heart. So much of the discipline of salvation has been tried upon him in vain; his after-backsliding seems to betray the falsehood of his seeming repentance.

3. And once more: there is a still more fearful case even than these, namely, that of a Christian who sins after a course and habit of religion. We deceive ourselves by thinking that none turn aside into after-sins but those whose profession of repentance and of religion has been insincere. It is most certain, however, that people of a sincere but shallow or secure habit of mind do fall by the strength and suddenness of temptation, and by their own want of watchfulness and mortification of heart. Sins which they would never believe themselves capable of committing, they sometimes wake up and find that they have indeed committed. For all such men Satan lays cunning snares: he knows what baits have most allurement for them; and he dresses up his temptations with his own stolen light, making them seem all fair and akin to God's service. He knows how to open pitfalls in all lawful and in all holy places—in our homes, in our chambers, in church, at the very altar; and many whose religion is sincere but frail, fall heavily, and with high provocation of the Divine longsuffering. In such men, so enlightened, so fami-

liar with holy things, so aware of temptation, evil thoughts, unhallowed motions, dishonest casuistry, cheatings of conscience, evasions of light, deafness to warning, wilfulness, trifling with the preliminaries of temptation, and the like, have intenser spiritual evil than the ruder and broader disobedience of less practised and instructed minds. There is something very awful in the reiterated commission of any sin long known, professedly repented of, and habitually prayed against. If sin after baptism, or sin after repentance, be a provocation, what is sin against the light of many years and the realities of a mature probation? In such persons, year by year sin becomes more exceeding sinful; though their greater sins be forsaken, yet the less become more guilty; though they be less frequent, yet each one outweighs a multitude of sins done in the days of weakness and of twilight.

Still even for all these there is mercy. There is unspeakable consolation for them in the words, "not until seven times, but until seventy times seven;" "if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." What else remains to us but this alone? and what does this teach us, but that no provocations, no reiteration of disobedience, how often soever committed, even between the sunrise and the sunset,

shall shut out the true penitent from pardon? This is the one and only condition: "if he turn to thee, saying, I repent." There is no limitation in the covenant of God, no tale of sins fixed by number, no measure of duration or of frequency registered in heaven. If only the sinner repent—this is the one and only necessary condition; the longsuffering and compassion of the Son of God are inexhaustible. If any sinner be lost, he will be lost through his own impenitence.

Let us, then, fear to lose time in turning to Him. Delay hardens men's hearts. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and so ye perish from the right way, if His wrath be kindled, yea, but a little."[1] Let us, when through our great frailty we sin against Him, go to Him straightway, and cast ourselves at His feet, and put our mouth in the dust; let us confess all we have done, with all its aggravations, leaving nothing for the accuser to add against us. Morning and night let us lay ourselves open before our forgiving and pitiful Lord. When we have fallen into any definite and particular sin, let us record on our knees before Him our solemn resolution to avoid, with all watchfulness, all the preambles and invitations by which we have been betrayed to it. Let us lay the rod upon ourselves, praying Him to spare us. Let us ask of

[1] Ps. ii. 12.

Him not forgiveness alone, but bitterness and brokenness of heart, perpetual compunction, shame at our ingratitude, trembling and awe at our rashness in sinning against Him, the brightness of whose Presence would smite our whole being into dust and ashes. Blessed truth, that with Him is forgiveness seven times a day! for seven times a day do we commit greater sins than lost the paradise of God. "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?"[1]

[1] Job xxv. 4-6.

SERMON XX.

THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

Isaiah xliii. 3.

"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."

In this prophecy Isaiah foretells the gentleness of Christ. St. Matthew quotes it when he is recording the longsuffering of our Lord with the Pharisees. He had healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day: the Pharisees lay in wait to entangle Him by questions; and when He had baffled them, they "went out, and held a council against Him, that they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from thence: and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all; and charged them that they should not make Him known." This He enjoined, it seems, lest the Pharisees should be goaded and provoked, by the unwelcome proofs of His divine power, into precipitate acts against

Him. For their sakes He would have concealed Himself; lest, by contending with Him, they should destroy themselves. His whole ministry was full of the like gentle and tender forbearance, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen; My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." His ministry was not a public disputation, with clamour and popular applause, with factions in the city, and a following of people. It was silent and penetrating, "as the light that goeth forth;"[1] spreading every where with resistless power, and yet from a source often withdrawn from sight. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench;"[2] which seems to say, so light and soft shall be His touch, that the reed which is nearly asunder shall not be broken down, and the flax which has only not left off to smoke shall not be put out. A most beautiful parable of tenderness, of which Moses, the meekest of men, was a type, when he said in the Spirit: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the

[1] Hosea vi. 5. [2] St. Matt. xii. 14-20.

grass:"[1] and of which the Psalmist prophesied when he said, "He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."[2] The same was foretold by Isaiah: "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."[3] It was in His gentleness, His tender compassion, His longsuffering and patient endurance of sinners, that these prophecies were fulfilled.

Let us first take such examples as are recorded in holy Scripture; and then draw, from this view of our blessed Lord's character, the instruction which is implied in His perfect gentleness to sinners.

We see it, then, in all His dealing with His disciples. Wheresoever there were the first faint stirrings of faith or love, He cherished and sheltered them with tender care. In His teaching He led them on little by little, line upon line, drawing them first to familiar converse with Himself; not upbraiding their slowness; not severely rebuking their faults. When James and John would have

[1] Deuteronomy xxxii. 2.

[2] Psalm lxxii. 6, 7.

[3] Isaiah xxxii. 1, 2.

brought fire from heaven, He said only, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."[1] To Philip, when he blindly asked to see the Father, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?"[2] And when He detected their ambitious contests which should be the greatest, "being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?"[3] Even at the last supper He said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now:" and to St. Thomas, after his vehement unbelief, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing."[4] And to St. Peter, in chastisement for his three open denials, He said thrice, as in a doubting, melancholy tenderness, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"[5]

And so in like manner to all the people. It was to the whole multitude He said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."[6] He per-

[1] St. Luke ix. 55.
[2] St. John xiv. 9.
[3] St. Mark ix. 33, 34.
[4] St. John xx. 27.
[5] St. John xxi. 15-17.
[6] St. Matt. xi. 28-30.

mitted so near an access to all men, that it was turned to His reproach. He was "a friend of publicans and sinners." "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Again, we read: "One of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And He

turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."[1] And once more: "The Scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard

[1] St. Luke vii. 36-48.

it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."[1]

Now it is obvious that the source of this perfect tenderness to sinners is none other than the Divine compassion. It was the love and pity of the Word made flesh. It teaches us, however, some great truths, full of instruction, which we will now consider.

1. First, it is plain that this gentle reception, even of the greatest sinners, implies that where there is so much as a spark of life in the conscience, there is possibility of an entire conversion to God. Where there is room to hope any thing, there is room to hope all things. The greatest of sinners may become, we dare not say how great a saint. Such is the nature of sin, and of the human soul, and of all its energies and actings; such, also, the virtue of the blood of Christ; and such the power of the Holy Ghost, that be the sinner what he may, he may be purged and made

[1] St. John viii. 3-11.

white with the purification of the saints. I am speaking not of what is easy, or common, but of what is possible, and, by true conversion to God, pledged and sure: neither am I saying that there shall not be some difference between what such converted sinners will be, compared with what they might have been; but this is certain, that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."[1] Such is the mysterious nature of the human spirit, of its affections and will, such its energies and intensity, that it may, at any time, be so renewed by the Spirit of the new creation, as to expel, with the most perfect rejection, all the powers, qualities, visions, and thoughts of evil. We know so little of spiritual natures, that we are compelled to use metaphors; and often our illustrations become our snares, and we turn them into arguments, and reason from visible things to the inscrutable conditions of our spiritual being. For instance, we speak of the stains of sin, the soils of lust, the scars and wounds made by transgression in the soul: and it is true that what stains, soils, scars, wounds, are to the body, such are lusts, in deed, desire, and thought, to the soul. But we cannot therefore say that the spiritual nature is not susceptible of a healing and pur-

[1] Isaiah i. 18.

gation which is absolutely perfect, to which the cleansing or health of the body is no true analogy. For instance, the very life of sin is the will. By sin it is a corrupt and unclean will; by conversion it becomes cleansed and pure. So long as it is here subjected to the action of the flesh, it is imperfect; but when disembodied, what shall hinder its being as pure as if it had never sinned? What is the substance of the will? What is sin? And in what does sin inhere but in the inclination of the will? When this is restored to perfect holiness, what effect of the fall will remain? We are greatly ignorant of all these things; but it is evident that, be we what we may, if our repentance and conversion be true, there is no height of sanctification, no approximation to the Divine Image, that we may not make in this world, and in the world to come be made sinless in the kingdom of God. And if our spiritual nature may be made sinless in the life to come, how can we limit its purification in this world? How can we say that it may not be brought out from the effects of any sin, or habit of sinning, as intensely and energetically pure as if it had never been bribed and corrupted by evil; and, moreover, sharpened with a peculiar abhorrence of the defilement from which it has been delivered? Such is the mysterious complexion of a spiritual nature, that it may, in a

moment, and by an act of volition, virtually and truly anticipate an habitual condition of the soul; as, for instance, in a true death-bed repentance there is contained a life of penance and purity, though it be never here developed into act. And this may throw light on many questions; such as the condition of the heathen, and of those that are born in separation from the unity of the Church, and on the state of those who, after baptism, by falling into sin, have resisted the grace of regeneration. Of these last, it would appear that their condition is changed for the worse, in the point of having sinned with greater guilt, and done despite to that which should have been their salvation. By consent to sin, they have made the work of repentance more difficult and doubtful. The blood of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Ghost, have yet the power of a perfect healing and purification; but repentance, which, on their side, is the condition, it is harder to fulfil. Still, wheresoever there are the lingering remains of grace, or the least beginnings of contrition, there is hope of a perfect repentance, and of a perfect sanctity. It seems, then, that it was for this reason that our blessed Lord, the sinless One, suffered publicans, sinners, and harlots, and even the adulteress, to draw near to Him; because in them, under the foul gatherings of sin, which

spread like a crust of leprosy upon them, and in the darkness and death of their inmost soul, He could see the faint strength of a living pulse, the dim spark of sorrow, fear, remorse, and desire to be redeemed from the bondage of the devil, and therefore the susceptibility of perfect holiness, the unextinguished capacity of an inheritance with the saints in light.

2. Another great truth implied in our Lord's conduct to sinners is, that the only sure way of fostering the beginnings of repentance is to receive them with gentleness and compassion. This is a truth which is in the mouth of more than rightly understand it. Our Lord appears to have dealt with those who came to Him in two ways. Some He received, as we have already seen, with a Divine love and pity, and some with a piercing severity. But these last were those only of whom, it seems, there was hope no longer. The reed was already broken, and the flax was quenched. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves!"[1] These were they that had "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized"[2] by John unto repentance. Jesus said unto them: "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."[3]

Now, that which made our Lord so change His voice was the inward state of those to whom He spoke. He saw their falsehood, guile, and hollowness; that they were white without, but all unclean within. Their whole spiritual being was estranged from Him, and set in array against His truth and holiness: they were beyond the attractions of pity, and the power of compassion. Towards these His perfect sanctity breathed a holy indignation. To be gentle was to betray the work of God, and to add boldness to their impiety. He met them as He will meet them once more, in the day of judgment: but at the time He spoke, even His denun-

[1] St. Matt. xxiii. 13-15.

[2] St. Luke vii. 30.

[3] St. Matt. xxi. 31, 32.

ciations were mercies; warnings of a doom still delayed; offers of pardon to those who would be converted, that He might heal them.

But on those in whom there is the faintest stirring of repentance, the love of Christ falls with a soft but penetrating force. For there are in us, as it were, two minds, with two arrays of feelings, which are awakened and excited into act just as the tone and bearing of those who admonish us vary in their character. Impatience, irritation, self-defence, unfairness, resentment, self-approval, wilfulness, are so marshalled together, that they move all at once, and oppose themselves in one array and front against a harsh voice and a severe hand. And all these are the direct stimulants of pride and hardness; the most fatal hindrances to confession and repentance. To receive sinners coldly, or with an averted eye, an estranged heart, and a hasty unsparing tongue, will seldom fail to drive them into defiance or self-abandonment. A sinner that is out of hope is lost. Hope is the last thing left. If this be crushed, the flax is extinct. Through rough usage sinners fall into despair, and through despair into reckless contradiction of God's will, and thence into deliberate sinning, into taking pleasure in evil deeds, and, lastly, into "glorying in their shame." From this there seems no rising again: it is the nearest ap-

proach to the state of fallen angels. Such are the effects of a merciless severity; whether it arise from harshness in the reprover, or from a rigid tone of morals, and a mistaken jealousy for the glory of God. I have said that many, who little understand what they are saying, are wont to speak boldly of the tenderness wherewith sinners should be welcomed to repentance: and they shew their misunderstanding in this; they confound the pure severity of compassion with personal harshness of temper. Nothing can be more dangerous and repulsive than a harsh spirit. Truth told without love is perilous in the measure in which it is true. The promises of God, held out without tenderness, are so offered as to turn sinners away from mercy. But if any thing can be more dangerous than this, it is the presumptuous way in which men give largess of God's mercy, and encourage sinners to believe themselves to be forgiven before they are penitents, or to be penitents before they have more than entered on the threshold of repentance. What can be more unreal and misleading than to press on men the belief that they are forgiven, when their whole soul cries aloud that they have not repented; or to persuade them that their sins are blotted out, if only they can bring themselves to believe so? as if self-persuasion, without contrition of heart, were a full remission of sins.

What antinomianism, what superstitious reliance on forms and rites, what blind seeking to charms and divinations, can be farther than this from the forgiveness of the Gospel? Our blessed Lord, who was so tender and merciful, did not so slightly heal the wounds of those who came to Him. With ineffable compassion He spoke words of fear and warning. It was His very tenderness that gave them such a penetrating sharpness. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "Many are called, but few are chosen." "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved." "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." As also the parables of the last judgment, and of the unprofitable servant, the wedding-garment, the barren fig-tree, and the like; what do they teach us, but that conversion, and a life of repentance, and the reaching of life eternal, are awful and arduous realities, full of danger and anxious fear? His tenderness was not to dispel the fears of penitents, but to change them into a holy and saving fear; to teach them to be afraid, not of

Him, but of themselves; to trust in His tenderness as thoroughly as they mistrusted their own hearts. One great hindrance in the way of true conversion is an imperfect knowledge of His Divine character, and a mistrust of His infinite compassion. His tenderness is a thing so far above the thoughts even of saints, that it is no wonder that sinners, fallen and soiled with evil, should not be able to believe it. The mysteries of faith are not more above the understanding of men to comprehend, than the gentleness of Christ is beyond their hearts to conceive. That One so pure, so keen in His holy will, so grievously provoked by habitual disobedience, should endure the approach of sinners, is contrary to every natural suggestion of their minds. They fear to come within the range of those eyes that are "as a flame of fire." Their own consciousness of inward sinfulness makes them turn even from repentance. There is in every sinner a great burden of misery, soreness, and alarm; but even these, instead of driving him to confession, make him shut himself up in a fevered and brooding fear. And it was in this peculiar wretchedness of sin that the gentleness of our Lord gave to the sinners who approached Him both solace and hope. They felt that, shrink as they must from priest and scribe, Pharisee and Sadducee, ay, and from

all human eyes and human hearts, there was in Him something that no one else possessed, a softness of eye, and a gentleness of speech, a meekness of bearing, and a compassion in His touch, which drew them away from all men, and out of their very selves, to cast their whole being upon Him. It was a strange courage which came upon them; a boldness, full of trembling, yet an awe without alarm. What little motions of good were in them, what little stirrings of conscience, what faint remainder of better resolutions, what feeble gleams of all but extinguished light—all seemed to revive, and to turn in sympathy towards some source of kindred nature, and to stretch itself out in hope to somewhat long desired, with a dim unconscious love. It was an affinity of the spirit, working in penitents, with the spirit of Christ, that made them draw to Him. In Him they felt that their worst fears were quelled. They were not afraid to confess their unworthiness. They felt Him to be pitiful, and that He would bear long with them, and not cast them out, or upbraid them for their soiled and miserable state; and this opened a new future to them. It seemed to break through a prison-wall; to make a breach in the thraldom of their daily round of sins, in the oppressive consciousness of guilt. They seemed to see before them a promise of peace, and a hope that one day they

should be set free from the bondage of themselves. The mere transitory thought that forgiveness is yet possible, that the favour of God is not for ever gone, that they may even now one day enter into bliss—all this makes the heart of the weakest to be strong, and of the hardest to melt away. And what is the very life of this hope but the tenderness of Christ, the unwearied patience, the longsuffering, and gentle pity of our Redeemer? Therefore, it was not only because of His infinite compassion as God, that He so dealt with sinners; but because, knowing the nature of man, its strange depths and windings, its weakness and fears, He knew that this was the surest way of winning them to Himself.

And to come to ourselves in particular: we have, each one of us, made trial of this same gracious and tender compassion. As, for instance, in the many years between our baptism and our repentance; for how few they are who, after baptism, have not so fallen as to need a particular and deep repentance! For how many years the grace of our regeneration lay in us oppressed, and to all outward eyes extinguished! What multitudes of early faults, premature sins, even in childhood, have most of us committed; and how soon did the whole range of evil open itself upon us; and how consentingly did we enter upon it—first

in its outskirts and, perhaps, with fear; and in a little while with an habitual self-possession, until we became worldly, selfish, and fearless! What but His patience would have borne with us? What but His gentleness would have cherished our few better dispositions and holier thoughts, and fostered them into the convictions of repentance? Perhaps there was nothing of God in us but a few texts of Holy Scripture, a dread of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and a few prayers, said with unclean lips in the very midst of actual sins: and that even this should have been fostered by Him into the grace of illumination, of holy fear, and of devout prayer; that the small and all but stifled motions of spiritual life should be now unfolded into the reign of Christ's kingdom in our hearts, — is a strange and surpassing mercy, a very miracle of patience. And again, even after bringing us to repentance, what provocations have we offered to His long-suffering! How shallow and vapid has our contrition been; at least, for how long a time was it little better than a sullen fear or a selfish remorse! And by what breaches of better resolutions, by what reservations of indulged faults, by what retractings of our expressed intentions, has our repentance been retarded! For how long a time were we two distinct characters, as distinct

as if we had a twofold personality! In secret how full of confessions and protestations of abasement; and yet in the sight of the world how buoyant and self-trusting! How long did we keep back some sins still unconfessed; how full of wiles were we in extenuating them, even on our knees; how often we went back to them again; and with how little indignation at our relapses! Nevertheless He bore with all. He gave us time, and the pleadings of His Spirit, and wakened us up to see our shame, because He saw that the reed was not altogether broken.

And, once more: even in those whose repentance is far advanced there is much to call for His forbearance and compassion; as, for instance, in the slow formation of their religious character. Even in those who live a religious life, what imperfections still remain, what a mixture of motives and purposes, what littleness and inconsistency, what fear of man, what worship of the world! How few can, even after their conversion to God, resist impressions from without, as from the maxims, examples, rules, tone of society! How few are stedfast against the swaying to and fro of public opinion, and are able to keep themselves from the fluctuations by which the face of the Church is disturbed! And well were it if only these greater things moved us: most men are at

the mercy of much less active and powerful causes. For the remainders of old tempers, such as pride, anger, self-will, are still within them, and make them susceptible of manifold temptations. They acquiesce in a low standard of devotion, and weaken themselves by yielding to the weaker practice of others; and all this produces a wavering ambiguous life, which is neither worldly nor devout, having the beginning of better things, but in a hindered and obstructed state. Such people often settle down into a languid and lukewarm habit, which must be a slight of peculiar point and emphasis to Him who, for their redemption, died in agony. The tardy, wavering, inconstant, and often retrograde movement of our religious life must be highly displeasing in His sight. And that we are spared and still aided by His grace, by His truth and Spirit, and by His special providence, is a signal proof of His changeless compassion, and patient endurance even of sinful infirmities. Only let us compare ourselves with His dealings towards us. Let us see what we are by the side of what we might have been, if the grace of our baptism, and the lessons of our childhood, the humiliation and discipline of our repentance, had taken its full effect, and had wrought their perfect work. Let us compare what we do with what we know, what we know with what He

has taught us, what we pray for with what we really desire. How laggard and half-hearted is our religion at its best estate! How full of dark spots and deep hollows is the brightest and fairest character! How much do we provoke and try His pity; ever going back, swerving aside, doing great things weakly, and high things feebly, and holy things coldly! "If Thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who should abide it? But there is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt Thou be feared."

And one more example we may take, in His dealing with those that are tried by affliction, by loss of those they love, or by sickness, anxieties, disappointments. All these things are in His hand; and He lays them on, not all at once, but little by little, to prepare us for greater trials. We never have more than we can bear. The present hour we are always able to endure. As our day, so is our strength. If the trials of many years were gathered into one, they would overwhelm us; therefore, in pity to our little strength, He sends first one, then another, then removes both, and lays on a third, heavier, perhaps, than either; but all is so wisely measured to our strength, that the bruised reed is never broken. We do not enough look at our trials in this continuous and successive view. Each one is sent to

teach us something, and altogether they have a lesson which is beyond the power of any to teach alone. But if they came together, we should break down, and learn nothing. The smoking flax would be put out; and we should be crushed "into the dust of death."

And now to conclude: how great a consolation there is in this Divine tenderness of our Lord! How it bids good cheer to those who have at last begun to amend their lives, but are sorely burdened, and at times tempted to give up for lost! Be your beginning never so late, yet if it be true, all shall one day be well. It is a word of cheer to us all. Alas for us, if He were soon wearied out as we are, soon provoked, ready to upbraid, sharp in the strokes of His hand; where should we have been long ago? What in His sight is the whole Church under heaven, but a bruised reed, and weak; a smoking flax, smouldering, struggling, ready to expire? Even in its best estate, in its first love, in the fervour of its first conversion, it is little more. And what is it now? The age of prophets, apostles, martyrs, is past; and for the saints, they seem few and hidden. The Church is bruised by schisms; her strength bowed down from its ancient stateliness, to droop along upon the earth; her lights are scattered and dim; here and there they shine out feebly and alone,

as if to say that the flax is not wholly quenched. Where is now the strength and fervour of other days? Where are the penitents, and the mourners, and the prostrate? Where are the companies of those who chastened themselves with fasting, and were strong in spirit, following in the path of the Cross? Where are they that forsook home, and all that they had, to live as strangers, for the love of the heavenly country? Where are now the pure, and the meek, the holy and humble men of heart, the devoted, and the gifted? Surely the days are already come, when, because iniquity abounds, the love of many hath waxed cold; and truth is perishing, in preparation for that day of which the Lord asked, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

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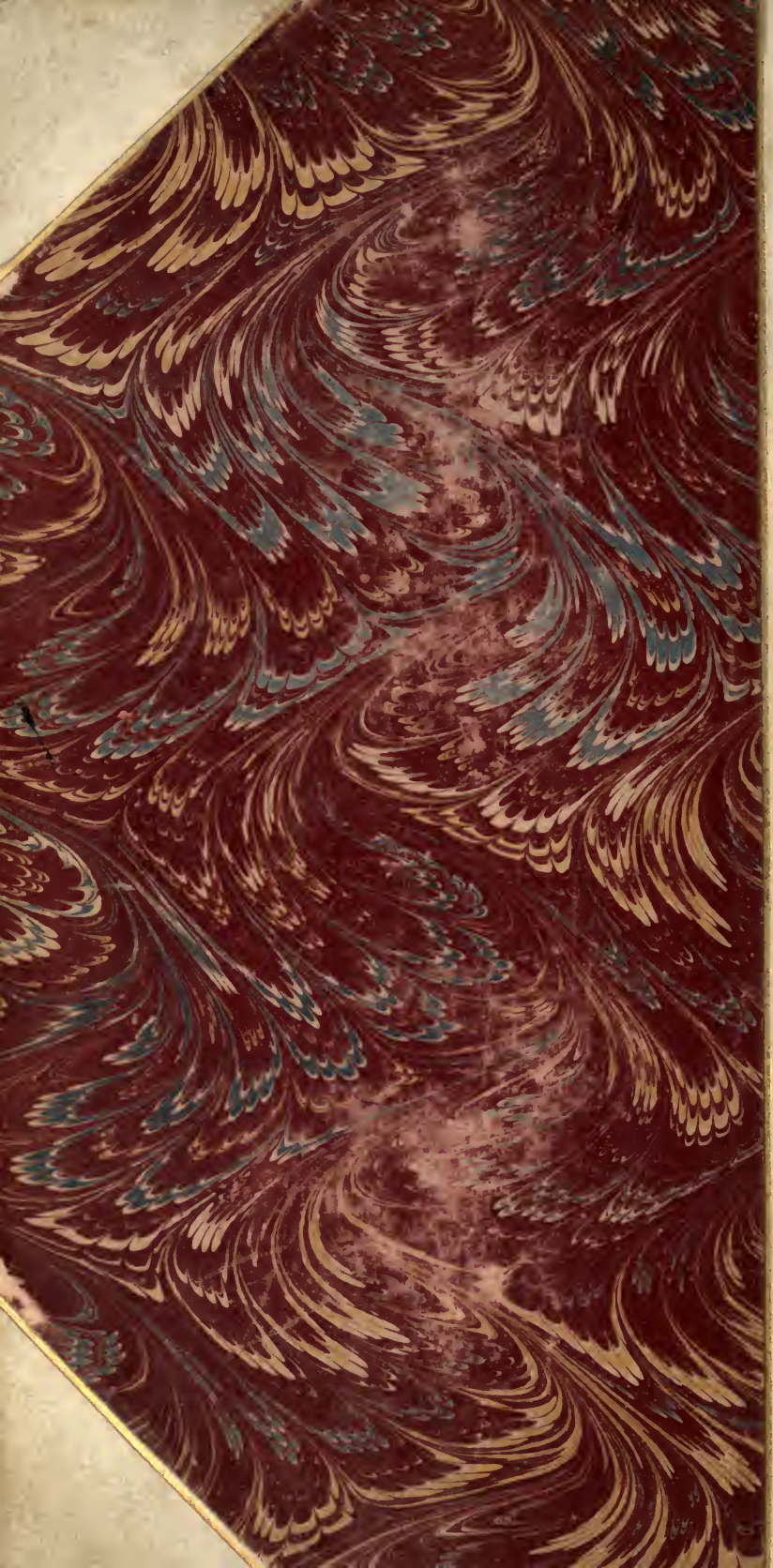
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